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THE END OF THE LINE . H . H .

THE
LIFE AND REMAINS
OF
THEODORE EDWARD HOOK.

BY THE
REV. R. H. DALTON BARHAM, B.A.,
AUTHOR OF "THE LIFE OF THOMAS INGOLDSBY."

IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. I.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET,
Publisher in Ordinary to Her Majesty.

1849.



LONDON:
Printed by S. & J. BENTLEY, WILSON, and FLETCHER,
Bangor House, Shoe Lane.

PREFACE.

A FEW years before his death, Mr. Theodore Hook placed a selection from his contributions to the "John Bull" newspaper in the hands of Mr. Bentley for publication; some way was made with the work, which was to have been called "Bull's Mouth," and part was actually printed off; circumstances, however, intervened which led to the postponement of the plan, and it was not resumed till about eighteen months ago, when Mr. Bentley first proposed that I should undertake the editing the volumes in question, and should prefix to them a short memoir referring mainly to Mr. Hook's literary career.

To this, after some hesitation, and after learning that no more complete account of his life was contemplated by the family, I acceded. As I advanced with my task, I found the materials already in my possession to be more abundant than I had anticipated; but it was mainly owing to friends, who were obliging enough to supply me, from time to time, with much additional matter—and, it is remarkable, how

very few ever spent an evening, though it were but *one*, in the society of Theodore Hook without carrying away something to be remembered—that I have been enabled to effect an extension of the original design.

Without wishing to deprecate just criticism, I am inclined to hope that some excuse will be found in these circumstances for the want of order and connection observable in the following pages.

As regards the contents of the second volume, it is generally admitted that political pasquinades are parts, though humble ones, of political history, and the information they supply, not to be found elsewhere, on many minute, but not unimportant points of political action, seems to warrant their re-publication in a collective form. I have, therefore, without presuming to interfere with Mr. Hook's general arrangement,* only ventured to discard such articles and portions of articles as appeared merely personal or obsolete; and if those that have been retained appear, once, to have borne a sting somewhat of the sharpest, their venom must long since have evaporated, and they may be presented now—to borrow an illustration of Mr. Moore's—harmless as dried snakes.

* Mr. Hook's M.S. index having been left incomplete, it is possible that a few (poetical) articles from the later volumes of J. B. may have been inserted, for which he is not responsible.

It remains, to record my sincere gratitude for the assistance with which I have been so liberally supplied. To Mr. Dubois, who has forwarded many of the most interesting details of his friend's early history, my thanks are first and especially due; the most agreeable recollections, of what has proved to me a very agreeable occupation, are associated with the correspondence to which the kindness of that gentleman invited.

To Mr. Shackell I am deeply indebted for much valuable information respecting the literary undertakings in which Mr. Hook was engaged, and for the courtesy with which he has placed private letters, &c., at my disposal.

To Mr. Robert Hook, also, I have to offer my acknowledgments for the service he has rendered in correcting some important errors connected with his family history; that his assistance has not been made more largely available, and extended to other portions of the work, is to be attributed wholly to my backwardness in applying for it; an omission for which, I am well aware, I am answerable both to him and to the public, but which originated in an unwillingness to intrude a work, of the slight and restricted character originally contemplated, upon his notice.

Mrs. Woodforde, of Taunton, will, perhaps, pardon

this public mention of her name ; as it was not specially prohibited, I cannot refrain from tendering her thanks on the part of myself and my younger readers for the interesting particulars communicated respecting "the peerless Edward."

I have but to add, that many anecdotes, in which the abundance of detail and circumstance might give rise to a doubt as to their genuineness, are told, as nearly as my memory has enabled it to be done, in Mr. Hook's own words, from whom I myself heard them ; or have been taken from notes made but a few hours after their relation.

R. H. DALTON BARHAM.

LOLWORTH, *November 16, 1848.*

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LIFE
OF
THEODORE E. HOOK.

CHAPTER I.

BIRTH OF MR. THEODORE E. HOOK.—ANECDOTES OF HIS FATHER.—
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GER POST."—"THE INVISIBLE GIRL."—THE "FORTRESS."—
"MUSIC MAD," ETC. — "KILLING NO MURDER :"—ITS CURIOUS
PREFACE.

MEN endowed merely with conversational talents, however brilliant their wit, and perfect their success, must be content, like actors whom they in a measure resemble, with the applause of their contemporaries ; they have little to hope for from posterity ; their reputation is sunk, as it were, in a sort of life annuity, bearing indeed a larger and more available interest than is commonly derived from fame of a more enduring nature, but which terminates, for the most part, with their day and generation. They, of all others, enjoy

their good things in this life, and can well afford to leave the exclusive claims on posthumous renown to their more industrious brethren of the pen. *Litera scripta manet*, but *bon-mots* are creatures of an hour, soon sinking into oblivion, to be born again, by a species of metempsychosis, under a different form and another parentage.

In running the eye over the genealogies of celebrated wits, how many familiar names rise to view of worthies on whose genius the pithy but provoking *ob. s. p.* must be inscribed! We are compelled to take such characters, like departed beauty, upon trust; and naturally hasten to transfer our admiration to excellences present and patent. What remains, for example, of George Selwyn to excite our interest and confirm the unanimous verdict of his associates—a few apocryphal puns and a single epigram!

That the author of “Sayings and Doings” stands in jeopardy of passing away rapidly from the memory of man, cannot, indeed, for a moment be believed: so long as a taste for the lighter works of fiction endures, “Maxwell” “Gilbert Gurney,” &c., must ever take high place and precedence on our shelves; and we have no more doubt that, a century hence, the spectre of “Martha the Gipsy” will haunt the imaginations of our great-grand-children, while endeavouring to trace out, in the area of some gigantic Grand Junction Railway Station, the site of what once was Bloomsbury Square, than that the narrator of the tale himself, would have readily given his last half-crown to any red-cloaked old lady who might have happened

to solicit alms, after nightfall, in that neighbourhood. His literary fame is safe.

But any estimate of the powers of Theodore Hook, drawn from his writings alone, must be fatally inadequate and erroneous. As a novelist he has been not unfrequently equalled, and occasionally surpassed, by more than one of his compeers; and, whatever the eminence to which his published works have raised him, it is as nothing compared with the position which, by virtue of his varied talents,—his brilliant and unflagging wit, has been unhesitatingly conceded to him in society. As an improvisatore he was unapproachable. But it is precisely in these, its higher qualities, that his genius cannot be appreciated save by those who knew him.

To attempt the portraiture of such a man, would be a hopeless task; something, however, may be done, some few features may be caught, some of the *ἔπεα πτερόεντα* may be arrested, and sufficient examples may be collected to convey a general, though faint idea of that rich humour which, with an unparalleled prodigality, he scattered on every side. It is with this object the present compilation has been undertaken; and, in pursuance of his plan, that of placing before his readers, at one view, the scattered *ana* of this extraordinary individual, the Editor has not scrupled to avail himself of much that has already appeared in print, with which are combined the results of his own limited acquaintance with Mr. Hook, and the memoranda of one who was on terms of intimacy with him during many years.

The father of the subject of our memoir, Mr.

James Hook, the well-known composer, was a native of Norwich, born in the year 1746. He had been intended originally for some active employment, but evincing at an early age a decided taste for music, and having been rendered incompetent by an accident which deprived him of the use of one of his feet, for the occupation proposed, his parents were induced to procure for him such instruction in his favourite science as their means would allow; he was accordingly placed with a gentleman named Garland, and, in due time, obtained the post of organist in one of the churches of his native city. Thence proceeding to London, he was engaged in the same capacity at the celebrated Mary-le-bone Gardens, and finally settled at Vauxhall, where he remained an established favourite for upwards of half a century.*

As a composer he is spoken of highly both by Dr. Burney and Parke, though the latter, indeed, qualifies his approbation with something like a charge of plagiarism.—Where is the musical author against whom this accusation has not been brought? Among his more important works may be mentioned “The Ascension,” an oratorio, and a publication which was very favourably received, entitled “Guida di Musica;” but the majority of his productions were of a lighter cast—songs, cavatinas, and the music of numberless operettas, melodramas, &c., such as “Cupid’s Revenge,” an Arcadian pastoral, “The Lady of the Manor,” “Too Civil by Half,” “The Soldier’s Re-

* He was, also, for some years, organist of St. John’s church, Horsleydown, in the Borough. He is said to have composed 140 complete works, and above 2,000 songs.

turn," &c., &c., most of which were more or less popular in their day among the frequenters of the "royal property," then in its high and palmy state, and the various theatres.

He appears, indeed, to have been of a peculiarly lively and joyous disposition, not averse from enjoying a joke even at his own expense. Some of the sallies attributed to him bear a strong family resemblance to the numerous progeny of his son Theodore. Walking with Mr. Parke along the Strand, they encountered—a great rarity in those days—a perfectly clean and well appointed hackney-coach, its number being "1." Mr. Parke remarked the circumstance, and said the vehicle really looked as good as new.

"There is nothing extraordinary in that," replied his companion, "every body, you know, takes care of number *one*."

Mr. Hook was married twice; by his first wife (Miss Madden) a lady not only well connected, but distinguished for her beauty and accomplishments,* and esteemed for her many virtues, he had two sons, James, and the subject of the present memoir, his brother's junior by seventeen years. The elder was sent to Westminster School, where his wit and vivacity brought him into collision, and sustained him in the contest too, with that "jocular Sampson," as Peter Plymley calls him, the future champion of the Anti-Jacobin, George Canning, then a student at

* She was the author of, at least, one theatrical piece, "The Double Disguise," played with success at Drury-lane, in 1784, her husband providing the music.

Eton. The provocation given was a caricature, in which three Westminster boys appeared placed in a pair of scales, and outweighing an equal number of Etonians; this elicited from Canning the following epigram, printed in "The Trifler," an Etonian periodical, to which he and Frere were the chief contributors:—

"What mean ye by this print so rare,
Ye wits of Eton jealous,
But that we soar aloft in air,
While ye are heavy fellows."

Hook immediately replied through the "Microcosm," the Westminster organ, in these lines:—

"Cease, ye Etonians! and no more
With rival wits contend,
Feathers, we know, will float in air,
And bubbles will ascend."

In 1791, Mr. James Hook entered at St. Mary's Hall, Oxford, where he graduated and took holy orders, having previously declined an advantageous appointment in India. His progress in the church was rapid and successful. In 1797, he was presented with the Rectory of Laddington, in Leicestershire; soon after this, having attracted considerable notice by his political writings, which were of the strongest Tory bias, he formed an acquaintance with Mr. Pitt, who always entertained a great regard for him, and who, as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, presented him, about 1804, with the livings of Hertingfordbury, and St. Andrews, Hertford, in the gift of the crown, which were afterwards exchanged for that of Whip-

pingham, in the Isle of Wight. In 1802, he was appointed chaplain to the Prince of Wales, of whom he became a personal friend; the latter, to the time of his death, both as Prince Regent and King, never forgot the wit and charm of character which had first recommended Mr. Hook to his notice, and, on all occasions, treated him with marked kindness. In 1807, he obtained a prebendal stall in Winchester cathedral, and finally, in 1825, Lord Liverpool, by command of his majesty George IV., gave him the deanery of Worcester.

One of his earliest essays in authorship was a pamphlet of considerable merit, entitled, "Publicola," in which, under the circumstances of an imaginary revolution, the doctrines of Paine, Horne Tooke, Godwin, Thelwall, and others of that enlightened and radical fraternity, were treated with exquisite satire. Among his remaining productions the names perhaps, of "Al Kalomeric,* an Arabian Tale," depicting the growing spirit of French Republicanism, and the "Good Old Times; or, The Poor Man's History of England," a periodical series, which was extremely popular, together with the "Anguis in Herbâ," may yet survive. As a political writer, Dean Hook enjoyed a high reputation, second indeed to none of his time; and one which was by no means diminished by the publication of a couple of novels, named respectively "Pen Owen," and "Percy Mallory." In the former of these, which abounds with that sort of knowledge only to be obtained by an intimate acquaintance with the world

* *i. e.* Καλος, μερος, *Bonaparte.*

in its best circles, will be found, under the character of *Tom Sparkle*, an admirable sketch of his friend, the amiable and witty Tom Sheridan, son of Richard Brinsley.

Upon the basis of these entertaining volumes, the unclaimed offspring of his leisure hours, the Dean's literary fame, as has been the case with greater men, is like to rest: his polemics have long since become altogether obsolete.

As a young man, although never moving in theatrical circles, he exhibited indications of the family taste for the drama, and in 1795, on the occasion of the royal nuptials, he furnished the libretto to an operetta, "*Jack of Newbury*," which was produced at Drury Lane, under the auspices of his father, who wrote the music. Two years afterwards, "*Diamond cut Diamond*," a musical entertainment, was brought out at Covent Garden, for the benefit of Mrs. Mountain, father and son, as in the former case, taking their respective shares in the composition.

In 1797 he married Anne, second daughter of Sir Walter Farquhar, Bart., a lady distinguished for her talents and, better still, for her high principles and well regulated feelings. He died in 1827.

In disposition, talents, and accomplishments, he very nearly resembled his younger brother; and, perhaps, the pursuits and habits of their youth were not altogether of a dissimilar turn. While at Westminster School, for instance, he is said to have dressed himself as an old beggar-woman, and in that character to have succeeded in drawing from the charity of Dean Vincent no less a sum than half-a-crown.

The latter's horror may be imagined, when he subsequently saw three of the boys, Harley, the present Lord Oxford; Carey, afterwards Bishop Carey; and another school-fellow, busily employed in treating the supposed elderly lady to an extempore shower-bath under the pump.

But James was blessed with advantages which never fell to the lot of Theodore; in his case the inebriety of wit had been sobered by a regular education; and the exuberance of animal spirits, restrained by the ties of his sacred calling, strengthened by an early and a happy marriage. But it was, doubtless, mainly owing to his excellent mother's watchful care that he was enabled thus to pass in safety those perils in the outset of life upon which genius so often suffers shipwreck. Who that knew him does not lament that such a boon was denied to Theodore? *

Theodore Edward Hook was born September 22nd, 1788, in Charlotte-street, Bedford-square. The first school to which he was sent was a sort of "seminary for young gentlemen," a green-doored, brass-plated "establishment" in Soho Square. Here,

* In his novel, "Gilbert Gurney," in which so many of his own early adventures are detailed, and personal feelings portrayed, and which, in his diary, he always speaks of as "my life," Theodore makes his hero's brother, who, by the way, is just seventeen years his senior, write to him as follows:—"When I was young, I had a disposition for every sort of gaiety, and a turn of mind for satire and caricature; and if I had been left (do not be angry with me for the expression) kicking up and down about London, a loungeur in the streets, an idler in society, and a dangler in the playhouse green-rooms, my belief is that I should have ended my career in no very enviable position."—Vol. iii. p. 109.

by his own confession, he used regularly to play truant, passing his spare time in strolling about the streets and devising plausible excuses to satisfy the unsuspecting pedagogue. On the day, however, of the illumination for the peace of Amiens, he preferred spending the morning at home, and accordingly assured his parents that a whole holiday had been given in accordance with the general rejoicings. Unluckily for his scheme, his brother happened to pass through the square, and on observing evident signs of business going on as usual at the academy, he went in, made inquiries, and discovered that the young scape-grace had not made an appearance there for three weeks. Of course, instead of being permitted to see the fire-works, &c., Master Theodore was properly punished and locked up for the remainder of the afternoon in the garret.

He was next sent off to a Doctor Curtis's, at Linton in Cambridgeshire, where, at the age of thirteen, he put together his first dramatic sketch, of which neither the name nor fate has reached us, but which he doubtless contrived to turn to account on some subsequent occasion. There, at all events, if nothing else, he picked up, in one of his school-fellows, a hero for his last novel, "Peregrine Bunce," a proof of his early habit of observation and appreciation of character. On the doctor removing to Sunbury, his pupil accompanied him, but was soon after, at the request of the latter, removed and transferred to Harrow, too late, however, as he himself averred, to make much progress there. A more probable reason for his non-success may be found in the confessions of "Gilbert

Gurney;" he says there, with evident reference to himself, "My school-life was not a happy one. I was idle and careless of my tasks. I had no aptitude for learning languages. I hated Greek, and absolutely shuddered at Hebrew. I fancied myself a genius, and anything that could be done in a hurry and with little trouble, I did tolerably well, but application I had not." And who can fail to discover, even in employments less distasteful to him, traces of the same haste, and impatience of labour? Dashed off at score, as his stories commonly were, volume after volume hurried without forethought or revision through the printer's hands, it is marvellous that they are what they are; not to speak of minor inaccuracies, how much of exaggeration might have been softened down, repetition avoided, and interest added, had his works only received at his hands but half the attention which literary parents are in the habit of bestowing upon their progeny!

His entrance at Harrow was signalised by the perpetration of a practical joke which might have been attended with serious consequences. On the night of his arrival he was instigated by young Byron, whose contemporary he was,* to throw a stone at a window

* "Gurney," though with a little intentional inaccuracy, thus alludes to the fact:—"I was born in the same year, and in the same month of the same year, as Lord Byron, but eight days later, on the 30th of January, a memorable day, too. I always felt a sort of sympathetic satisfaction, as Byron advanced in age and reputation, in the recollection that, though with inherent respect for his rank and talents, I could not possibly take the liberty of coming into the world before him—I began my life so nearly about the same period."

where an elderly lady, Mrs. Drury, was undressing, Hook instantly complied, but though the window was broken, the lady happily escaped unhurt. Whatever degree of boyish intimacy he might at this time have contracted with his lordship, it was not sufficient to preserve him from an ill-natured and uncalled-for sneer in the "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers," an aggression amply repaid by the severe, yet just criticisms which appeared in the "John Bull" on certain of the noble bard's effusions, and on the "Satanic school of poetry" in general. The acquaintance, such as it was, was broken off in 1802 by Hook's premature withdrawal from Harrow, and does not appear to have been resumed.

At this period an affliction befell him, not only heavy in its immediate pressure, but most calamitous in its results. His excellent mother died, and with her perished the only hope of restraining the youthful Theodore within those bounds most essential to be preserved at his age, and of maintaining him in that course of study, which, if persevered in for a few years more, might have enabled him to reach a position not less honourable than that enjoyed by his more prosperous brother. Mrs. Hook appears, indeed, to have been one of those best of wives and women, who, by the unobtrusive and almost unconscious exercise of a superior judgment, effect much towards preserving the position and respectability of a family constantly imperilled by the indiscretion of its head—one, who like a sweet air wedded to indifferent words, serves to disguise and compensate for the real inferiority of her help-mate.

That Theodore felt his loss deeply, is most certain; we are informed that in his Journal, mention is made of his beloved parent frequently, and in terms of an affection pure and undiminished to the last. No one can be inclined to doubt the genuineness of the feeling betrayed in the following lines, supposed to be uttered by one of his heroes, and penned four-and-thirty years after the event to which they evidently allude:—"Years, years, have rolled on, and yet that hour is still vividly fresh in my mind—the smell of the soldered coffin is still in my nostrils—the falling earth upon its lid still rings in my ears."

A man less fitted than his father, to have the superintendence of a lad of Theodore's precocious and peculiar talents can scarcely be imagined. Easy in disposition, and addicted to the pleasures of society, in which his son was even now capable of distinguishing himself, he seems to have received him at once on a footing of equality, incompatible with the exercise of anything like parental authority.

But, abilities to amuse and astonish his father's friends, formed by no means the sum total of the lively Theodore's accomplishments, a mine of far more precious metal was quickly discovered, one capable of yielding, both to father and son, returns not only more tangible but even more gratifying than the partial applause of boon companions. The public was to be entertained, and for "good entertainment" the public is always well content to pay. The old gentleman, as we have seen, had already availed himself of the literary assistance both of his

wife and his son James, who on more occasions than one, had supplied the vehicle for his musical compositions; death, however, had robbed him of the one, and the more important duties of his profession claimed the attention of the other. A ready substitute started up in the person of Theodore. A couple of songs, one of a grave, one of a gay turn, written, composed, and sung by the youthful aspirant, seem first to have suggested the idea which was immediately adopted, of employing him in the construction of a comic opera for the stage. His first effort was "The Soldier's Return, or, What can Beauty do," in two acts, performed at Drury Lane in 1805—"The Overture and Music entirely new, composed by Mr. Hook." Inartificial as was the plot, and extravagant the incidents, such for example, as the escape of the Right Honourable Mr. Racket by ascending a chimney, and crawling over the roof of a summer house, yet the whimsicalities of an Irishman, played by Jack Johnstone, the abundance of puns, good, bad, and indifferent, borrowed and original, the real fun and bustle of the piece, carried it along triumphantly; and, at the close, placed the author in the proud position of a successful dramatist—*ætat.* 16! The following is a specimen of the poetry:—

"I've often seen a new made pair,
The swain all raptures, sighs, and love;
Yet soon the wife droop'd in despair,
For beauty tempts, and youth will rove.

Talk not of hearts,
 Of flames and darts,
 Soon flatt'ry turns to snarling ;
 To pass my life
 A happy wife,
 Make me an old man's darling.
 Fal, lal, tal, lal, lal, &c.

“For then no rivals buzz around,
 Nor absence spent in sighs and tears ;
 He's at your elbow always found,
 His words made up of *loves* and *dears*.
 Talk not of hearts,
 Of flames and darts,
 Soon flatt'ry turns to snarling ;
 To pass my life
 A happy wife,
 Make me an old man's darling.
 Fal, lal, tal, lal, lal, &c.”

For this he received as his share of the proceeds
 50*l*.

His next production was the farce of “Catch Him who Can,” brought out at the Haymarket (1806), the music supplied, as in the former case, by his father. It was written for the purpose of bringing into juxtaposition the peculiar talents of Liston and Mathews, the plot turning on the escape of a supposed murderer. So admirable, indeed, was the rapidity with which Mathews, as the nobleman's servant, assumed some six or seven different disguises, and so complete his personation, particularly of Mr. Pennyman (a favourite character of the actor's off the stage, and then first introduced to the public),

that the audience on the first night, fairly taken in, failed to recognize his identity, and received him with perfect silence. The applause was, of course, rapturous on the discovery of the deception. It is needless to add that the piece, clever in itself, and supported by such talent, had a long and prosperous run, and sufficed to establish Master, or rather Mr. Theodore's reputation both before and behind the curtain. In fact, for some time past he had been, as well, the pet of the green-room as the plague of the property-man, and all the minor officers of the establishment. His father's connexion with the theatre had been the means of gaining for him the much coveted *entrée*, even before he became professionally entitled to it; and actors and actresses, jaded with their dreary labours, hailed with delight so agreeable an addition to their circle.

At times, perhaps, he ventured to introduce a little more animation than was exactly consistent with the strict discipline of the *coulisses*. On one occasion poor Dowton was well nigh frightened from his propriety, by the sudden appearance of his young friend upon the stage, who, in appropriate costume, and with an ultra-melodramatic strut, advanced in place of the regular walking gentleman to offer him a letter. At another, during the heat of a contested Westminster election, the whole house was electrified by a solemn cry, proceeding apparently from the fiend in the "Wood Demon," of "SHE-RI-DAN FOR E-VER!" and uttered in the deepest bass the speaking-trumpet was capable of producing. This last piece of facetiousness was rather seriously resented by Graham, one

of the proprietors of the Haymarket, who threatened its perpetrator with perpetual suspension of his "privilege," and it required all the interest of influential friends, backed by an ample apology on the part of the culprit, who promised the most strict observance of decorum for the future, to obtain a reversal of the decree.

It was not, however, in Master Theodore's nature to forego an opportunity of indulging in his besetting propensity, and one soon after presented itself, happily unattended with any risk of drawing down the vengeance of the irate potentate. A young gentleman, a son of Sir Charles B—, was anxious to escort his cousin, with whom he was carrying on something of a flirtation, to the play, but not daring to mention the subject to his father, a rigid Presbyterian, who held all theatres in most especial horror, regarding them as so many sinks of iniquity and pits of perdition, he opened his heart to his vivacious companion.

"Never mind the 'governor,' my dear fellow," replied Hook, "trust to me; I'll arrange every thing; get you a couple of orders, secure places—front row—and nobody need know anything about it."

Hook was as good as his word; the tickets were procured, the places engaged, and Mr. B— with his fair relative started off in the highest possible spirits to avail themselves of the promised treat. Their confusion may be easily imagined, when Liston, who could take pretty nearly what liberties he liked with the audience, and who of course had been previously primed by Hook, advanced to the orchestra during one of the bursts of laughter which his

drollery had drawn forth, and looking round the dress-circle with a grave and offended air, exclaimed,—

“ I don’t understand this conduct, ladies and gentlemen ! I am not accustomed to be laughed at ; I can’t imagine what you can see ridiculous in *me* ;—why, I declare, there’s Harry B— too, and his cousin Martha J—,” and he pointed at the centre box where the happy pair were enjoying the fun ; “ what business have they to come here and laugh at me, I should like to know ! I’ll go and tell his father, and hear what *he* thinks of it.” The unhappy objects of his attack, thoroughly confounded, not only by this personal address, but by the immediate direction of all eyes to their *locale*, scrambled from their seats and rushed from the house, frightened out of their wits.

Another time, Liston himself was the victim. Having procured a bladder with a penny whistle attached to it, after the fashion of a bag-pipe, Hook made his way under the stage during the performance of the “ Finger Post,” and introducing the orifice of the tube into the opening of the “ float,” close to Liston’s foot, as the latter was about to commence his song, “ When I fell into the pit of love,” proceeded to elicit from his apparatus the most discordant squeaks imaginable, by way of accompaniment, not more to the amusement of the audience than the bewilderment of the actor, who could not conceive whence on earth, or under the earth, the sounds proceeded. The song was tumultuously encored, and mystified as he was, Liston of course had no alternative but to repeat it, his unseen assistant squeezing and squeaking the while more vigorously than ever.

In the midst of all these fooleries, and others a thousand times more extravagant, young Hook, to borrow his own pun, had an *eye* to business; the freedom he so much coveted, and the income necessary to render it enjoyable, were dependent wholly upon his own exertions, and accordingly, with that industry for which throughout life he was remarkable, he set to work, and in some cases in conjunction with his father, but in the majority of instances without any assistance whatever, he furnished the theatres during the next three or four years with a variety of entertainments, all more or less effective. The first of these was a "petite pièce," in one act called the "Invisible Girl," the idea taken from the "Babillard" of M. Charles Maurice, and adapted to the extraordinary enuntiative powers of Jack Bannister, on whose benefit night, April 28, 1806, it was produced at Drury Lane. The author himself appears to have considered it as "a daring and rather dangerous attempt at something new;" had his hero, whose volubility, to the utter extinction of every one else, is the main feature of the farce, paused a moment for the prompter, all would have been lost. This amusing trifle has lately been recast by Mr. Charles Mathews, and produced, with complete success, under the title of "Patter versus Clatter."

In the year following, 1807, "The Fortress," a drama in three acts, also taken from the French, was brought out at the Haymarket. From which we may take, as a fair specimen of the easy jingle with which these pieces abounded, a song sung by Mathews in the character of Vincent, a gardener, much in vogue in its day:—

/

“ When I was a chicken I went to school,
My master would call me an obstinate fool,
For I ruled the roast, and I roasted all rule,
And he wonder'd how ever he bore me ;
His table I blotted, his windows I broke,
I fired his wig, and I laughed at the smoke,
And always replied, if he rowed at the joke,
Why—my father did so before me !

“ I met a young girl, and I prayed to the miss,
I fell on my knee, and I asked for a kiss,
She twice said no, but she once said yes,
And in marriage declared she'd restore me.
We lov'd and we quarrell'd, like April our strife,
I guzzled my stoup, and I buried my wife,
But the thing that consol'd me at this time of life
Was—my father did so before me !

“ Then, now I 'm resolv'd at all sorrows to blink,
Since winking 's the tippy, I 'll tip 'em the wink,
I 'll never get drunk, when I cannot get drink,
Nor ever let misery bore me.
I sneer at the fates, and I laugh at their spite,
I sit down contented to sit up all night,
And, when the time comes, from the world take my flight,
For—my father did so before me ! ”

In the course of the same season, “ Tekeli, or, The Siege of Mongratz,” was produced; one of the most popular melodramas of the day, and which still keeps the stage in the provinces, and was re-produced a few years ago, as an afterpiece, at Astley's; the terrific combats, patriotic sentiments, and very pretty music wherewith it abounds, always ensuring it, spite

of Byron's ban,* a favourable reception from the galleries. "The Siege of St. Quentin," a drama of a similar description, quickly followed ;—the plot was founded on the celebrated Battle of St. Quentin, in 1557, when the French, endeavouring to raise the siege of that city, were signally defeated. The object of the piece, that of exciting enthusiasm in favour of the Spanish nation, together with the magnificence of the *mise en scene*, procured for it considerable success. It sleeps with sundry others: "Trial by Jury," "Darkness Visible," "Safe and Sound," "Music Mad," &c., all of which, having run their course, have perished *illachrymabiles*. This last, indeed, deserves a word of notice, if only on account of its supereminent absurdity. The principal character, borrowed by the way, bodily from "Il Fanatico per la Musica" of the Italian stage, and rendered infinitely more ridiculous by being metamorphosed into a native of our most unmusical isle, is, as the title indicates, an amateur and so passionately devoted to his favourite science as to insist upon his servant's wearing a waist-coat scored all over with crotchets and semiquavers: It had been considered the master-piece of the celebrated Naldi.

In 1809, the destruction by fire of the two patent houses having compelled the rival companies to coalesce and repair to the Lyceum, principally for the purpose of providing employment

* Gods ! o'er those boards shall folly rear her head,
Whom Garrick trod, and Kemble lives to tread ?
On those shall Farce display buffoonery's mask,
And Hook conceal his heroes in a cask ?

English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.

for the humbler members of the profession, Mr. Hook contributed the well-known afterpiece of "Killing no Murder." Independent of the intrinsic merit of the piece itself, and the admirable acting of Liston, as *Apollo Belvi*, and Mathews, as *Buskin*, for whom it was especially written, (though by the way it is but justice to add, on the authority of Mrs. Mathews, that the latter character was but a "sketch which Mr. Mathews fitted up *ad libitum*,")—there were circumstances attending its representation which invested it with peculiar interest, and enlisted all the sympathies of the audience in favour of the author. It appears that on the MS. being submitted to the deputy Licencer, Mr. Larpent, certain passages reflecting on the Methodist preachers, induced that gentleman in the first instance, to place a *veto* on the performance. A compromise, however, was effected, the objectionable scene re-modelled, and the play allowed to proceed. Whether it would have been wiser upon the whole to have suffered it to go forth with its imperfections on its head, and to have trusted to the good taste of the public to demand the suppression of any incidental improprieties, may be a question, the more so, as the Licencer's authority, extending only to the acted drama, could offer no hindrance to its publication. Some half dozen editions, containing the passages omitted in the performance, were struck off and circulated like wild-fire, together with a preface, from which, as the author has thus an opportunity of stating his own case, it may be as well to present our readers with a few extracts :—

"I should have suffered my gratitude to the public to have been felt, not told, had not some very singular circumstances compelled me to explain part of my conduct, which, if I remained silent, might be liable to misconstruction. On the evening previous to the performance of 'Killing no Murder,' I was much surprised to hear that it could not be produced, because Mr. Larpent, the reader of plays (as he is termed), had refused to grant his licence for it. The cause of the refusal was, I heard, political. I revolted at the idea; and as a young man entering life, felt naturally anxious to clear my character from the base imputation of disloyalty. Then I heard it rumoured that the ground of the refusal was its immorality. Here again I was wounded; for though I confess I have no pretensions to sanctity, yet I hope I shall never prostitute my time in the production of that for which even wit itself is no excuse.

"Thus situated, I set off in search of the gentleman who had strangled my literary infant in its birth; and to find him I referred to the Red-book, where I discovered that John Larpent, Esq., was *clerk* at the Privy Seal Office, that John Larpent, Esq., was *deputy* to John Larpent, Esq., and that the *deputy's secretary* was John Larpent, Esq. This proved to me that a man could be in three places at once; but on inquiry, I found he was even in a fourth and a fifth, for it was by virtue of none of these offices he licensed plays, and his place, *i. e.*, his villa, was at Putney. Thither I proceeded in a post-chaise in chase of this ubiquitous deputy, and there I found him. After a seasonable delay to beget an awful attention on my part, he appeared, and told me with a chilling look, that the second act of my farce was a most 'indecent and shameful attack on a very religious and harmless set of people' (he meant the Methodists), 'and that my farce altogether was an infamous persecution of the sectaries.' Out came the murder. The character of

a Methodist preacher, written for Liston's incomparable talents, with the hope of turning into ridicule the ignorance and impudence of the self-elected pastors, who infest every part of the kingdom, met with the reprehension of the licenser.

* * * * *

"It was in vain I adduced Mother Cole in the 'Minor,' Mawworm in the 'Hypocrite,' Barebones in the 'London Hermit,' and half-a-dozen other parts. The great licenser shook his head 'as if there was something in it,' and told me that Lord Dartmouth had the piece; if he did not object, it might yet be played, but if his lordship concurred with him, not a line should be performed. I took my leave, fully convinced how proper a person Mr. Larpent was to receive, in addition to his other salaries, four hundred pounds per annum, besides perquisites, for reading plays, the pure and simple performance of which, by his creed, is the *acme* of sin and unrighteousness. His even looking at them is contamination—but four hundred a-year—a sop for Cerberus—what will it not make a man do?"

* * * * *

"Now, in defence of the part of *Apollo Belvi*, as originally written, I consider it necessary to speak. It is a notorious fact that the Methodists are not contented with following their own fashions in religion, but they endeavour hourly to overturn the Established Church by all means, open and covert; and I know, as a positive fact, that it is considered the first duty of Methodist parents to irritate their children against the regular clergy, before the poor wretches are able to think or consider for themselves. Nay, they are so ingenious in their efforts for this purpose, that they inculcate the aversion by nick-naming whatever object the children hate most after some characteristic of the Episcopal religion; and I have known a whole swarm of sucking methodists

frightened to bed, by being told that the *bishop* was coming—the impression resulting from this alarm grows into an antipathy, and from having been, as children, accustomed to consider a bishop as a bugbear, it became no part of their study to discover why—the very mention of lawn sleeves throws them into agonies ever after. Seeing, then, with what zeal these sectaries attack us, and with what ardour they endeavour to widen the breach between us, by persecution and falsehood, I did conceive that the lash of ridicule might be well applied to their backs, particularly as I prefer this open mode of attack to the assassin-like stab of the dagger, to which*the cowardly Methodist would, for our destruction, have no objection to resort.

“But my ridicule went to one point only. Mr. L. Hunt in his admirable essays on Methodism, justly observes, that a strong feature in the Methodists’ character is a love of preaching. If it be possible that these self-elected guardians and ministers have an ascendancy over the minds of their flocks, and have the power to guide and direct them, it becomes surely the duty of every thinking being to consider their qualifications for such a task.

The wilful misleadings of the clever Methodists, from the small proportion of talent that exists among them, are more harmless in their tendency than the blasphemous doctrines of ignorance. The more illiterate the preacher, the more infatuated the flock; and there is less danger in the specious insinuation of a refined mind than the open and violent expressions of inspired tailors and illuminated cobblers. It was to ridicule such monstrous incongruities, that, without any claim to originality, I sketched the part of Belvi, in the following farce.—I conceived, by blending the most flippant and ridiculous of all callings, except a man-milliner’s (I mean a dancing-master’s), with the grave and important character of a preacher, I should, without touching indeli-

cately on the subject, have raised a laugh against the absurd union of spiritual and secular avocations, which so decidedly marks the character of the Methodist. Of the hypocrisy introduced into the character, I am only sorry that the lightness of the farce prevented my displaying a greater depth of deception. All I can say is, that, whatever was written in "Killing no Murder," against the Methodists, was written from a conviction of their fallacy, their deception, their meanness, and their profaneness." * * *

There can be no doubt that Hook's triumph was complete, and possibly, as he himself expresses it in a preface to a subsequent edition, "His best thanks were due to Mr. Larpent;" most certainly all the allusions to "*what we must not mention*," were eagerly caught up by the "house," and a little personal vituperation of the deputy licenser himself, was received by our "free and enlightened public" with unequivocal symptoms of satisfaction. Another farce, "Exchange no Robbery," deserves honourable mention, and were the gods to favour us again with such a pair as Terry and Liston, might be revived to the great delectation of such of her Majesty's lieges as still can contrive to dine at five o'clock, and think with Hamlet, "The play's the thing."

* "It may not be amiss to state that at that sty of mud and corruption, Rowland Hill's chapel, the congregation were congratulated from the pulpit on the destruction of Covent Garden Theatre, and the annihilation of a score of firemen, noticed as a singular proof of the wisdom of Providence in these words:—"Great news, my brethren—great news—a great triumph has taken place over the devil and the stage-players—a fire in one of their houses. Oh may there be one consumed every year! it is my fervent prayer!"—*Preface*.

CHAPTER II.

PRIVATE THEATRICALS.—“ASS-ASS-INATION.”—SUETT’S FUNERAL.—
MR. HOOK’S FIRST APPEARANCE UPON ANY STAGE.—HIS EXTRAOR-
DINARY STAGE-FRIGHT.—HIS DEBUT AS AN IMPROVISATORE.
—IMITATIONS.—INTRODUCTION TO SHERIDAN AND HIS SON.—
LETTER FROM AN ACTOR.

ALL the while Theodore, who had not yet attained his majority, was far from being content with playing the part of an *auditor tantum*, or even of a *poeta*; at the houses of some intimate friends, that of Mr. Rolls in particular, he was also wont to figure as a first-rate performer, and to represent—

“Himself, the great sublime he drew.”

In company with Messrs. Henry Higginson and Mathews, his associates in many a mad freak, Wathen, Douglas Kinnaird, the host, and a few others, he assisted at a variety of private theatricals, very frequently writing pieces for the occasion. One, indeed, “Black and White, or, Don’t be Savage,” performed with unqualified applause at Grange House, the seat of Mr. Rolls, was afterwards deemed worthy of being submitted to the severer critics of the Haymarket, at which theatre, on the return of Mr. Hook from Mauritius, it was brought out under the title “Pigeons and Crows,” a change of name, under the circum-

stances, not perhaps the most felicitous. "Ass-assination," a sort of burlesque on Hamlet, was another of these extravaganzas, broad enough "for the meanest capacity," but amusing withal, abounding in point and pun, as well as local hits, and quite worthy the attention of any country manager, amateur, or professional who may happen to be at a loss for Christmas novelties. Take by way of sample, the opening scene:—

Enter Princess, with a light.

PRINCESS. 'Tis midnight! Suspicion's gone to sleep, Credulity has warmed the bed, and Dulness tucked him up. My father is not dead; I've hoaxed the public; I've shut my regal daddy in the coal-hole, and now am Regent. The dirty work is done, and I'll to bed! to bed! to bed!

[Exit on tiptoe, P. S.]

Re-enter, O. P. and P. S., Amatavelli and Mumtiffoni, each peeping in.

AMA. Have you been listening?

MUM. I have.

AMA. How like a courtier!—'tis well. Falalaria, our Princess Regent loves——

MUM. (*With a considerable degree of self-complacency.*) I think she *does*!

AMA. Not *you*—another!

MUM. Then, by my soul, he dies!

AMA. Nay! by my soul, he *lives*! 'Tis Blubbero, the mighty King of Finland.

MUM. From Finland!—pshaw! A king of dolphins and prince of whales.*

* The pun runs quite as glibly in the Latin, and has been ascribed to Lord Stair. A discussion happening to arise at the French Court, where he was present, on the comparative

AMA. 'Tis so. That mighty king of fish would now be the same *flesh* as Falalaria.

MUM. It cannot be.

AMA. Why, then I *lie* ; but if I ever spoke the truth 't is true.

MUM. A king of fish to hook my Falalaria ! Of fish, d'ye say ? Oh, by my *sole* ! a *maid* like her, a *bait* for such a *scaly grampus* as King *Blubbero*. I'll ring the *barbel*-l of the world, and *gudgeon* him of his fair prize. Dead as a *herring* shall he be, who strives to fish in troubled waters.

AMA. Contain your passion—he comes. His fur be-speaks his royalty.

MUM. Fur!—would he were further ! I see his roe, the stately swim and insolence of vermin. I'll meet him.

AMA. No, you had better not. Let us retire about a foot or two, and overhear his conversation.

MUM. We will.* [*They both retire.*]

dignity of the two titles, that of the Dauphin, and of the Prince of Wales, his lordship is recorded to have set the matter at rest by observing, that the Roman poet had long ago decided the question of precedence in the following line :—

“Quanto Delphinis balæna Britannica major.”—Juv. *Sat.*

* The playbills circulated on these occasions were also curiosities in their way ; the following is a specimen :—

MONDAY EVENING, January 30th, 1809,
Will be presented various Dramatic Scenes, commencing with a
part of Macklin's Farce of

LOVE-À-LA-MODE.

Sir Archy M'Sarcasm, . . . By Mr. Cook (Mr. MATHEWS
in imitation).

Sir Callaghan O'Brallaghan, . Mr. Moloony, from the Theatre
Royal, Cork, *his first appearance* (Mr. THEODORE HOOK).

If the reader has any further curiosity on the subject it may be gratified by a reference to "Bentley's Miscellany," November, 1847, where the "Historical Tragedy, discovered in an old building near Stratford-upon-Avon, &c.," is given entire.

Mr. Hook made his first appearance on any stage at Mr. Rolls's theatre in 1809, and it is not a little remarkable that one, who from a child had exhibited such extraordinary self-possession, should have sunk

<i>Beau Mordecai,</i>	. . .	Mr. Simmonds (Mr. ROLLS).
<i>Squire Groom,</i>	. . .	Mr. Lewis (Mr. MATHEWS in imitation).
<i>Truant,</i>	. . .	Mr. Wolsey (Mr. LINDSAY).
<i>Charlotte,</i>	. . .	Mrs. Fitzackerley (Mrs. MATHEWS).

A SONG BY SIGNOR BARTOLOZZI; AFTER WHICH A
SCENE FROM HAMLET.

<i>Ghost,</i>	. . .	By Mr. Wroughton (Mr. ROLLS in imitation).
<i>Hamlet,</i>	. . .	Mr. Kemble (Mr. MATHEWS in imitation).
<i>Horatio,</i>	. . .	By the gentleman who was so well received in <i>Sir Callaghan</i> , his second appearance (Mr. THEODORE HOOK).
<i>Marcellus,</i>	. . .	Mr. Latter (Mr. PRYOR).

A SONG BY MR. INCLEDON (Mr. MATHEWS IN IMITATION),
AND THEN A SCENE FROM MY GRANDMOTHER.

<i>Vapour,</i>	. . .	By Mr. Farley (Mr. HOOK in imitation).
<i>Souffrance,</i>	. . .	Mr. Wolsey (Mr. LINDSAY).
<i>Dicky Gossip,</i>	. . .	By the late Mr. Suett (Mr. MATHEWS in imitation), being his first appearance since his death.

at first sight of the audience into an almost helpless state of stage fright. "He had been as bold and easy," says Mrs. Mathews, "during the rehearsals as if he had been a practical stager. All the novices seemed fluttered but himself; but when he entered at night as *Sir Callaghan O' Brallaghan*, the Irish officer in "Love-à-la-Mode," he turned pale and exhibited such palpable terror, that I almost supported him on my arm; his frame shook, his voice failed him, and

And, after that, the Entertainment will conclude with the Last Piece, that is to say, viz., a Tragedy from the German in Two Acts, now performed for *the first time*; entirely new, with new scenes, new dresses, new decorations, new music, new musicians, new curtain, new lamps, and new everything, entitled and called

ASS-ASS-INATION; or, THE ORACLE.

The principal characters by Mr. Latter, Mr. Wolsey, Mr. Swehtam (Mathews spelt backwards).

A Young Gentleman, his first appearance on any Stage
(Mr. HENRY HIGGINSON).

Mr. Malooney, Who was received with un-
bounded applause in *Horatio*,
being his third appearance,
positively the last this evening
(THEODORE HOOK).

A very Young Gentleman, or Master Venter Loquor (MA-
Infant Prodigious, . . . THEWS).

Princess Falalaria, married to Mrs. Fitzackerly (Mrs. MA-
Blubbero, betrothed to Mump- THEWS).
tifoni, in love with Amatavelli.

The PROLOGUE by Mr. Malooney, who, it is expected, will be received with reiterated bursts of applause in this Tragedy, for this occasion written by himself. And, Ladies and Gentlemen, that's all.

VIVANT REX ET REGINA.

Memoirs of C. Mathews, vol. ii. p. 272.

not a word of the first scene, nor a note of the song he attempted at the pianoforte (which he had sung so well in the morning), were audible to any body except myself."

Supported as they were, these performances assumed a very different character from the general run of those dullest of all dull exhibitions of vanity, private theatricals; not to speak of Mr. and Mrs. Mathews, Hook himself, who soon recovered his nerve, possessed a degree of talent which would have secured him a place, probably not far inferior to that occupied by his versatile friend, had he thought fit to enlist among the "regulars." Superior to the latter in musical attainments, he was inferior to him alone in those extraordinary powers of personation, by virtue of which, the mind as well as manner, the tone of thought, flow of idea and habit of expression of the individual to be represented, were faithfully exhibited, an achievement far beyond the reach of the mere mimic. Captain C—d, of whom, by the way, Stephen Price used to say, "He is the only amateur performer I ever saw to whom I would have offered a salary: I would have given *him*, sir, five-and-thirty shillings a-week," was another proficient in this art, and Mathews used to narrate an amusing instance of his imitation of the well-known "Dicky" Suett, which was, he said, far more exact than his own.

They had both, then very young men, been invited to attend the funeral of the "poor player," and were placed in the same coach with Jack Bannister and Palmer. The latter sat, wrapped up in angry and indignant silence at the tricks which the two younger

mourners (who, by the way, had known but little of Suett) were playing; but Bannister, though much affected, nevertheless could not refrain from occasionally laughing, in the midst of his grief, while the tears were actually running from his eyes. At length, on the procession reaching Fleet Street, on its way to Saint Paul's Church-yard, where Suett lies buried, Mr. Whittle, commonly called "Jemmy Whittle," of the firm of Laurie and Whittle, stationers, came to the door of his shop to see the remains of his old friend pass to their place of rest. An obstruction in the road at this moment caused a short delay, when C—d called out in the exact voice and manner of the dead man,—

"Aha! Jemmy; oh law! how do? oh dear! going to be buried! oh law! oh law! oh dear!"

The astounded stationer rushed back to his house shocked, surprised, and possibly not a little alarmed at the sound of the familiar tones. It was a little singular, that at the conclusion of the ceremony, as the benediction fell from the lips of the clergyman, a grinning urchin, perched on a tomb-stone close by the iron rails, began vigorously to clap his hands. So practical a compliance with the "*plaudite*," at the actor's grave, struck the whole company; the boy, however, on being questioned and taken to task for his irreverence, blubbered out, "La, sir, there was only them two dogs outside as wanted to fight, and was afeard to begin, so I just did it to set 'em on like." The coincidence was a very pretty one as it stood—it was a pity to disturb it!

But even at this early period, Theodore Hook, and

at the time of which we write, he was yet in his twentieth year, gave evidence of the possession of a talent compared with which, mimicry in its perfection, available enough as an auxiliary, sinks into insignificance—that of the improvisatore. Those who have been in the habit of attending public meetings, or who have listened to the harangues so glibly “done into English” by next morning, of the orators of St. Stephens, cannot fail to have remarked how rarely even respectable prose is delivered where opportunity for preparation has been wanting. But in the art, if art it may be called, of pouring forth extemporaneous poetry, music and words, rhyme and reason all impromptu, Hook stood alone — rival he had none, of course he had his imitators :

“ The charming extempore verses of T——s’s,”

for example, will not readily be forgotten; another gentleman, also, found reason to remember his attempt at rivalry. Ambitious of distinction, he took an opportunity of striking off into verse immediately after one of Hook’s happiest efforts. Theodore’s bright eye flashed, and fixed on the intruder who soon began to flounder in the meshes of his stanza, when he was put out of his misery at once by the following couplet from the master, given, however, with a good-humoured smile that robbed it of all offence:—

“ I see, sir, I see, sir, what ’tis that you’re hatching ;
But mocking, you see, sir, is not *always* catching.”

There can be no doubt as to the perfect genuineness of these marvellous efforts of the human intellect ;

the word was given and the "numbers came," gushing fresh and sparkling from the fount. His companions at the table, and the observations that had fallen from them, afforded not unfrequently matter for his good-natured muse. But as often a subject impossible in any way to have been anticipated, was proposed by one of the company, generally the most incredulous, and with scarce a moment's consideration, he would place himself at the piano-forte, run over the keys, and break forth into a medley of merri-ment of which, unhappily, no idea can be conveyed, for the benefit and conversion of the sceptic.*

One instance has been recorded remarkable not only for the readiness and tact with which he interwove any passing incident, but for the extreme gracefulness of the comparison thus suggested. It was at a country mansion; Hook was in high spirits—when was he not to outward seeming! The Falernian had been of the right vintage, and the draughts neither too frequent nor too few. The evening passed delightfully away—still puns and pleasantries unexhausted, inexhaustible kept the table in a roar.

* The names of those present were frequently woven into the rhyme, or made to supply points to the verse. He is said once to have encountered a pair of most unmanageable patronymics, Sir Moses Ximenes, and a Mr. Rosenagen, a young Dane; the line antiphonetic to the former has escaped us; the latter, reserved till near the conclusion, was thus played upon:—

"Yet more of my Muse is required,
Alas! I fear she is done;
But no! like a fiddler that's tired,
I'll *Rosen-agen*, and go on."

It was too early to separate—Theodore had never been so happy; already had he sung several songs in his best style, and given more than one successful specimen of his improvising. A little something, known to ordinary mortals as supper; to those in a yet humbler sphere as “the tray,” made its appearance — the “mahogany mixture” deepened in its tint as the night wore on; the morning broke and—

“ Ne’er found such beaming eyes awake,
As those that sparkled there.”

One last song was solicited,—the subject, “ Good Night,”—such eyes, such lips, were not to be refused; Hook, fresh as ever, responded to the call; when, in the midst of the mirth, some one threw open the shutter—the sun was rising, and poured its early light into the apartment. On the instant the singer paused; a boy, with his wondering eyes fixed upon him, (and there were few auditors he loved better,) stood by his side. Like old Timotheus he “ changed his hand,” and turning to the child, compared his dawn of life to the glorious luminary whose course was just begun, rich with the promise of an unclouded day; while for himself, his meridian past, his career well nigh ended, there remained little but to wish for each and all, “ Good night ! ”

The first public display of this extraordinary faculty was made, we believe, on the occasion of a dinner given by the actors of Drury Lane Theatre, to commemorate the success of their manager, Sheridan, in the Westminster election. So rare a talent naturally

excited the admiration of a brother genius;—he honoured the young debutant with especial notice, made him known to his son, and gave encouragement to an intimacy which led to the introduction of Hook to a circle of society far higher than any in which he had hitherto moved, enabled him to make his way among the arbiters of fashion and disposers of patronage, and proved eventually the not remote source of all his fortunes, or rather,—for so, alas ! it turned out,—of all his misfortunes.

There appear to be two mental maladies which, like small-pox and the measles, seem inherent in our nature, and usually to be developed during the season of youth—the stage and the military mania. Or, perhaps, they may be but different modifications of one and the same disease, a plethoric vanity which must have vent; most certainly a morbid appetite for “new scenery, dresses, and decorations,” may be fairly ranked among symptoms common to both. The former, perhaps, has a little gone out of late since the mysteries of the “Green-room,” like all other mysteries in these days, have been so rudely unveiled, and the technicalities formerly of such awful interest in the mouth of the adept, have become vulgarized by constant publication. We need not pursue the subject, nor stop to inquire which “eruption” is the more perilous of the two. Hook, as we have seen, if he escaped the one, was constitutionally predisposed to the other, and this circumstance, added to the fact of most of his early associates, his father among the rest, being *attachés* of the theatre, being taken into consideration, it is no wonder that the fit, in his case,

was long and violent; and, but for the interposition of the friendly Machaon alluded to, it might have had a very different termination.

The new field, however, opened to him, offered more alluring objects for his ambition; and, instead of remaining the pet of popular singers, and the *delicia* of pretty actresses, he was smiled upon by "ladies of quality," applauded by great men and grave, and listened to with admiration even by royalty itself.

The revulsion of feeling which he manifested in after life, and the distaste to, not to say aversion from, everything connected with his former pursuits, and which smelt of the (stage) lamp, made repeatedly visible in his novels, &c., are remarkable, and hardly, perhaps, consistent with the great regard which he continued to entertain for many estimable members of the theatrical profession. A more faithful, and, spite of its ludicrous touches, a more painful picture of the miseries and mortifications incident to the vocation in question, can scarcely be found than in the following letter of advice, given by him in the "John Bull" many years after his own connection with the drama had ceased, and he had become "convinced," to use his own words, "of the total indifference with which plays, play-writers, players, and play-houses are considered, if ever thought of in good society."

"MY DEAR GEORGE.—I have received your kind favour, and the pheasants, 'for which relief much thanks.' Mary and I are really obliged, and I have great pleasure in saying that the children, considering the delicacy of their constitutions, are, for the most part, pretty well.

“In answer to your questions about my professional success, I ought, I believe, in candour to say, it has been most decided, and I am growing every day more popular with the public; but, bitterly indeed do I lament having quitted the trade to which my poor father apprenticed me, for, although I am quite at the top of the tree, I am the most unhappy creature in the whole world.

“I used vainly to imagine that the business of an actor was all play, but I have found to my cost that no trade, no profession upon earth, is so perpetually laborious to mind and body—laborious, too, at times and seasons when other people are partaking of the amusements and enjoyments of social and domestic life. At ten o'clock I go to rehearsal—study and arrange the nonsense which the manager chooses to accept from the wretched play-writers—who are all either in jail, or expecting to be sent there every day of their miserable lives)—liable to be fined forty pounds for refusing to perform a part which I know does not suit me, and in which no human being, except the author, can see the slightest merit; there I remain the whole morning, groping about behind the scenes, in the dark, smoky atmosphere of the play-house, or listening in the green-room to calumnies and silly stories of our ‘brethren of the sock and buskin,’ till perhaps three; I then mount to the wardrobe, where, in council with the tailor and the barber, I stay and discuss with perfect gravity and the most serious interest, the relative merits of different coats, waistcoats, and wigs, with a view to ascertain which combination of grotesque habits will best answer the

purpose of making me personally ridiculous, and produce the greatest portion of laughter at my expense in the one shilling gallery. In this pursuit, anxious to hear how my two or three sick children are (for in a London family of eight, the average rate is three down), I am delayed till near four. On reaching the stage-door, I find it pouring with rain, mixed with snow—having come out in thin shoes, and without an umbrella, I paddle up Drury-lane or Belton-street to my lodgings, where my wife has prepared everything to make me comfortable; and at five o'clock I sit down to my dinner, fire blazing, dishes smoking, and all extremely nice and snug. At a little after six, just as I am getting quite warm, and feel very happy, and rather heavy for sleep, I am warned by my dear Mary, "that it is time to go." Up I get, squeeze on my great coat, take my umbrella; find the streets ankle-deep in snow, atmosphere yellow and choking, mixed with more mizzling rain, too small and too light to be warded off—slip along the worst streets in London, back to the play-house, having in the way down, in consequence of quitting my warm fireside, contracted a violent tooth-ache to which I am very subject.

"The pain in my face increases during the time I am dressing—the barber arrives to 'do up my own hair' into a droll shape, it having been decided that it will produce a more ridiculous effect than a wig; the call-boy comes to hurry one, and I proceed to smear my chin and forehead with whitening, make crows' feet and eyebrows with a bit of burnt cork, and rub the end of my nose with a hare's foot covered with red

ochre; during this operation a 'gentleman wishes to see me;' he is admitted, and brings the agreeable intelligence, that a friend who had given me his acceptance for seventy pounds has dishonoured the bill, which is returned to me, and must be settled by ten o'clock the following morning. At this juncture a pretty, little, draggle-tailed maid-servant, whom I keep, and whose visits to the *coulisses* are specially interdicted by me, because I wish to have nobody's sins to answer for but my own, arrives to ask for the key of a cupboard (which I have brought away by mistake), to get something out for poor little Caroline, who has had a sudden accession of fever, and is considered by Mr. Kilpin, the apothecary, in imminent danger. I give her the key, and hear her romping with the half-drunken manager in the dark passage. Irritated, but too much pressed for time to be angry, I squeeze on the shoes which I thought would "be very effective;" in my haste I run the tongue of one of the buckles under the nail of my finger, and when the shoes are on, find the corn on the little toe of my left foot so pinched, that nothing but the impossibility of getting any others would induce me to wear them, while stamping on the floor in hopes of making matters easier, I perceive the coat and waistcoat which I have selected to wear, giving the most unequivocal proof of dampness by smoking furiously as they hang airing on the back of a chair before the fire.

"Besides this, it should be observed that I dress in the same apartment with a man whose aversion I am, and whose name is ipecacuanha to me; he is pompous,

and does tragedy—has the best place in the room, and all the fire to himself ; feeds the newspaper critics, who always praise him ; one of whom, who invariably abuses me, is his constant companion when we are dressing.

“ At length, however, I get to the green room, drink half a glass of muddy soft water from the tumbler, out of which every *lady* and *gentleman* of the company has drunk before, and will drink after me ; and, being ultimately summoned to the stage, I find the music sounding too well, the house empty of people, and full of fog—my tooth aching as if it would split my head—I feel the damp waistcoat sticking to my back—my eyes being hot, and my nose cold, the shoe on my *corny* foot having shrunk with the heat of the *float* (that is quite technical, my dear cousin), cutting and pinching me more dreadfully than the parchment boot of the Holy Inquisition could do. Here I have to act a scene with a cheap actor from the country, instead of Liston, or Terry, or Dowton, or any good hand to whose playing I am accustomed, and they to mine ; a stick who knows nothing of the point, and very little of the part ; and then arrive at the period where I have to sing a comic song, with speaking and pattering imitations of sundry men and other animals between the verses ; during the protracted symphony to this, I keep my tongue to my tooth in order to lull the pain, rest my corny foot upon my sound one, and think of nothing but my poor fevered child at home, and the protested bill at the bankers’,—putting my hand instinctively into my pocket, I find that I have left the little bit of reed with which I imitate Punch

and the ducks (the great hits of my song) in the waistcoat I have just taken off. I sing the song, of course without the ducks and Punch, but make up for the omission by dancing very funnily, forgetting at the outset the tight shoes and corns, and being unable, when I have once begun, to leave off. The pain I feel makes me twist and wriggle more than ordinary; the consequence is, that I am encored by some few boys in the gallery, who have paid sixpence a-piece for their privilege—the decent part of the audience dissent from the repetition, and I stand bowing humbly to the ‘liberal and enlightened public,’ a set of senseless brutes, whose tastes I despise, and for whose intellect I have most unqualified contempt.

“In the midst of my obsequiousness, one monster amongst the gods, more hardened than the rest, flings an apple at my head, which takes effect exactly on my throbbing tooth; shouts of ‘turn him out’ resound, and the cry of ‘go on’ increasing, I repeat all my little playfulnesses in detail (which are rendered wholly unintelligible by the clapping of the *ayes*, and the vigorous hissings of the *noes*,) and hop about upon my pinched foot with the most laudable activity.

“All this over, I go towards my dressing-room to avoid witnessing the degradation of the *ladies* of the profession, who, by the convenient connivance of the conductors of our theatrical establishments, are at present subjected to the open advances of every man who thinks himself entitled, by his wealth or rank, to knock down the barriers which separate virtue from vice, and decency from profligacy, and chooses to

attend the green-room to carry on a system which, in the days of Harris, Coleman, and Kemble, was confined to the lobbies, or to houses of a different description altogether. In the passage towards my retreat, I encounter the manager, smelling of vulgar potations, rather more drunk and infinitely more important than he was in the earlier part of the evening; he tells me I must study *Falkland*, in 'The Rivals,' for the next night (*Acres* being my *forte*)—he then introduces me to an author who has an equestrian melodrama to be read the following morning. I cannot conceive what makes them both so civil, till at last I discover that they want me to act, in their new piece, the part of a sorcerer, in a black horse-hair wig, with gilded horns, and be carried to the flies on the back of a fiery dragon, at the risk of my neck and reputation. I suspend my answer to their request, and the night wears on. At length the play and farce end; heated and tired, I take off my second dress, and put on my own damp clothes. I smear my face all over with grease and pomatum to get the paint out of the pores, and rub my hair out of curl. I find my boots (wet when I came) have shrunk so much by standing before the fire, that I can by no exertion get my heels home in them, and am obliged to walk to my lodgings with a hard, stiff, wrinkle under each foot. My toothache much worse than before, I hurry through the hall, and see a rehearsal of 'The Rivals' called for ten o'clock the next morning, and the new melodrama at one, begin my walk homewards through the mud, recur to the protested note and my sick infant, paddle up the same wretched streets that I had before

paddled down, get hustled by three tall women of the town, who, after pulling me about to my great discomfiture, leave me with a shout when they discover, by the light of a great gas lamp, that after all it is only funny — the actor man.

“When I get home the fire is out—my wife, tired of her lonely wretchedness, has gone to bed—the poor child is worse, and I, saddled with ‘Falkland’ in my pocket to study for the morning. That morrow brings the same routine, and so it goes on until Saturday, when the concern not being very prosperous, the treasurer cannot pay any of the salaries; and the only intelligence I get at his office is, that my benefit is fixed for the second day of Epsom Races, when the cheesemongers and bakers, who would take my tickets, will all be attending them, and, therefore, unable to go to the play:—find at the theatre a letter, offering me two sovereigns and my dinner to go to a patriotic party and be comical, at the City of London Tavern. Swear at the ‘fat and greasy citizens,’ who take a gentleman for a mountebank, and spend the whole of my Sunday in studying the part of Mustyfustigig, the wizard, in the infernal new melodrama of ‘Blue Blazes; or, The Intellectual Donkey,’ which it will cost me the price of a felon’s neck to refuse to act.

“These, my dear George, are but a few of the evils by which I am assailed in the midst of my success; and when I walk down to my nightly task, and see the ruddy-faced, healthy shopkeeper sitting quietly at his tea, by his cheerful fire-side, with his family round him, and recollect that he can weigh butter

without leaving his home, painting his face, or being subject to the insolence of a sottish manager; and sell cheese and hogs-lard without bowing for the usual indulgence of the enlightened public, or a chance of being hissed, or pelted with hard apples, penny-pieces, and pewter pots,—I heave a sigh of regret that I adopted a calling which I now *must* prosecute, but which is irksome in its duties, precarious in its existence, and which, above all, in my heart I cordially despise.

“ You have asked for an account of myself, and I give it you ; if not flattering, it is at least correct. Mary sends her best love ; and I beg you to believe me, dear George, yours truly, &c.”

CHAPTER III.

PRACTICAL JOKES.—THE MUSEUM.—MR. H—— AND THE GOLDEN EAGLE.—THE UNINVITED GUEST.—“LE GASTRONOME SANS ARGENT.”—TURNPIKES.—TOUR IN WALES.—MR. THOMAS HILL.—“THE HAUNCH OF VENISON.”—SIR P. D——E’S LARDER.—CROYDON FAIR.—THE HACKNEY COACH.—THE BERNERS STREET HOAX.

BUT at this period, it was for his performances off the stage, that the name of Theodore Hook became most notorious, for that series of practical jokes or “hoaxes,” which, inexcusable as they must be considered, were so inexpressibly ludicrous in effect, as well as original in conception, and were carried out with so unparalleled a degree of impudence, as to provoke the dullest of mortals to mirth. Transferred to paper even by his own pen, they necessarily lose much of their piquancy; but told as he, when “i’ the vein,” was wont to tell them, eye, tone, and gesture, all richly significant of fun, they were perfectly irresistible, it was not in nature *tenere risum*; at least, if the individual exists whose gravity could have held good under the circumstances, he may be—

“Fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils,”

or even for a resident fellowship at Cambridge, but for little else.

He commenced, as a very young man of course,

with the establishment of a museum, which boasted the most complete collection of knockers, the finest specimens of sign-painting, the most magnificent bunches of grapes, the longest barbers' poles, and the largest cocked hats that the metropolis could produce. His predatory adventures, indeed, evidently suggested to his friend, "Thomas Ingoldsby," the matter of one or two chapters of "My Cousin Nicholas," even if that worthy personage does not owe his existence altogether to some dim recollection of the vagaries of his great prototype. The scene at Brighton, for instance, with the abstraction of the "Jolly Bacchus," the pursuit, the little bare legs peeping out under the fugitive's arm, the hue and cry after the "Resurrectionist!" are not without foundation.

A more successful achievement, was the carrying off a gigantic Highlander, for there *were* giants in those days,—the race of snuff-taking Highlanders has sadly degenerated,—from the door of a tobacconist. A dark foggy night was selected for the purpose; the fastenings were carefully removed, a large cloak thrown over the shoulders of the gallant Gael, a southron hat placed upon his plumed brow, and the first dreamy-looking "Jarvey" that made his appearance, hailed. Open flew the door, down rattled the steps, and before the becaped and bebooted Jehu could descend from his box—"My friend—very respectable man, but a little tipsy,"—was tumbled into the hackney-coach, and the order given to drive on.

Hook's confederate in these freaks, and in some cases his rival, was a Mr. H—, who subsequently

becoming a wiser, if not a sadder man, entered Holy Orders, and withdrew from the society of his former companions. Theodore used to give an amusing account of this gentleman's sensitiveness, and of a sort of quarrel between them, to which, on one occasion, it gave rise. H—, who, it seems, had an opposition establishment in the pump-handle and bell-pull line, of his own, called on Hook, and in the course of conversation observed, that for a considerable time he had been looking at, and longing for what, if attainable, would have proved the first gem of his "collection." "However," he added, "as I have quite convinced myself that the thing is not to be got, I don't mind telling that in — Street, over a shop window, No. —, there is *such* a golden eagle! such a glorious fellow! such a beak, and such wings! &c., &c." Hook took little apparent notice of the communication at the time, but, some three or four weeks afterwards, prevailed upon his friend to "drop in and take a chop with him." The first course, whatever it might have been, removed, a servant entered, staggering under the weight of an enormous dish which, with some difficulty, was placed upon the table, the cover of corresponding size, which had itself probably graced the exterior of some tinman's "emporium," was raised, and displayed to the eyes of the astonished guest the identical features of the much-coveted piece of sculpture, gorgeous and glittering as gold-leaf could make it.

Every windy evening during the preceding fortnight had the spoiler taken his station within view of the devoted object—it stood firm, however, braved

the tempest, and defied the storm; at length his patience was rewarded, the wind shifted, and set in fresh from a particular quarter, a glance at the golden prize was enough—it moved, it “waggled!” Nothing now was wanting but a fitting opportunity, and that was not wanting long—a *lasso* had been provided, by means of which the royal bird was speedily dragged from his eyrie on the first floor, and deposited forthwith in a sack by way of game-bag. So far from entering into the joke, Mr. H— was seriously annoyed, and chose to look upon the abstraction in the light of a personal affront; what precise view the quondam proprietor might have taken of the transaction, and whether *his* feelings were equally nice upon the point, we are unfortunately not informed.

Most of the more amusing instances of Hook’s practical joking have been detailed, and with but slight embellishment, in “Gilbert Gurney,” which, as has been before hinted, is little more than a record of his own mad doings, loose thoughts, and feelings. Others have appeared in the very entertaining volumes of Mrs. Mathews, and a few have been recently printed in the life of “Thomas Ingoldsby.” *

* One from this last work we must venture to borrow. It was on the occasion of Lord Melville’s trial. Hook was present with a friend:—

“They went early, and were engaged in conversation when the peers began to enter. At this moment a country-looking lady, whom he afterwards found to be a resident at Rye, in Sussex, touched his arm, and said: ‘I beg your pardon, sir, but pray who are those gentlemen in red now coming in?’ ‘Those, ma’am,’ returned Theodore, ‘are the Barons of England; in these cases

One of his early friends observes :—" At this period the exuberance of his fun was irrepressible. He did all sorts of strange things, merely that he might be doing—"and if he had not done them, he had died.' One day he observed a pompous gentleman walking in very grand style along the Strand ; instantly leaving his companion he went up to him and said, ' I beg your pardon, sir, but may I ask, are you anybody particular ?' Passing on before the astonished magnifico could collect himself so as to reply practically or otherwise to the query."

One of the most notorious of these hoaxes was the Spanish ambassador's visit to Woolwich, so admirably told by Mrs. Mathews in the second volume of her husband's life, albeit, we fancy we have heard a somewhat different and less triumphant termination to the adventure. The scene supposed to have been enacted on the banks of the Thames, and also nar-

the junior peers always come first.' 'Thank you, sir, much obliged to you. Louisa, my dear ! (turning to a girl about fourteen), tell Jane (about ten), those are the Barons of England ; and the juniors (that 's the youngest, you know), always goes first. Tell her to be sure and remember that when we get home.' 'Dear me, ma' !' said Louisa, 'can that gentleman be one of the *youngest* ? I am sure he looks very old.' Human nature, added Hook, could not stand this ; any one, though with no more mischief in him than a dove, must have been excited to a hoax. 'And pray, sir,' continued the lady, 'what gentlemen are those ?' pointing to the bishops, who came next in order, in the dress which they wear on state occasions, viz. : the scarlet and awn sleeves over their doctors' robes. 'Gentlemen, ma'am !' said Hook, 'these are not gentlemen ; these are *ladies*, elderly ladies—the Dowager Peeresses in their own right.' The fair inquirer fixed a penetrating glance upon his countenance, saying as plainly

rated in the same pages, is not strictly authentic ; the landing on the lawn, marking out the projected line of the Paddington Canal, "just taking the end of that conservatory," the alarm of the portly proprietor, introduction to his wife and daughters, the excellent dinner, *recherché* wines and proffered bribe are little improvements subsequently introduced, and repeated, doubtless, so often as to have become matter of faith, if not with the inventor, at least with many of his friends. In point of fact we have before us a letter from Hook himself expressly denying, and in rather indignant terms, the story as it stands.

That an occurrence, similar in the principal feature, involving equal impudence, though with less of

as an eye can say, 'Are you quizzing me or no?' Not a muscle moved ; till at last, tolerably satisfied with her scrutiny, she turned round and whispered, 'Louisa, dear, the gentleman *says* that these are elderly ladies and Dowager Peeresses in their own right ; tell Jane not to forget *that* !' All went on smoothly till the Speaker of the House of Commons attracted her attention by the rich embroidery of his robes. 'Pray, sir,' said she, 'and who is that fine looking person opposite !' 'That, madam,' was the answer, 'is Cardinal Wolsey !' 'No, sir !' cried the lady, drawing herself up and casting at her informant a look of angry disdain, 'we know a little better than that ; Cardinal Wolsey has been dead many a good year !' 'No such thing, my dear madam, I assure you,' replied Hook, with a gravity that must have been almost preternatural ; 'it has been, I know, so reported in the country, but without the least foundation ; in fact, those rascally newspapers will say anything.' The good old gentlewoman appeared thunder-struck, opened her eyes to their full extent, and gasped like a dying carp ; *vox faucibus hæsit*, seizing a daughter with each hand, she hurried without a word from the spot."—*Ingoldsby Legends*, 3rd series, p. 69.

humour, did take place, is undoubtedly true; the *venue*, however, is to be laid in the neighbourhood of Soho-square, Frith-street, or Dean-street being, we believe, the actual spot, both, at that period, places of comparatively fashionable residence. Lounging up one of these streets in the afternoon, with Terry the actor, the nostrils of the promenaders were suddenly saluted with a concord of sweet odours arising from a spacious area. They stopped, snuffed the grateful incense, and peeping down perceived through the kitchen window preparations for a handsome dinner, evidently on the point of being served.

"What a feast!" said Terry. "Jolly dogs! I should like to make one of them."

"I'll take any bet," returned Hook, "that I *do*—call for me here at ten o'clock and you will find that I shall be able to give a tolerable account of the worthy gentleman's champagne and venison:" so saying, he marched up the steps, gave an authoritative rap with the burnished knocker, and was quickly lost to the sight of his astonished companion. As a matter of course he was immediately ushered by the servant, as an expected guest, into the drawing-room, where a large party had already assembled. The apartment being well nigh full, no notice was at first taken of his intrusion, and half-a-dozen people were laughing at his *bon-mots* before the host discovered the *mistake*. Affecting not to observe the visible embarrassment of the latter, and ingeniously avoiding any opportunity for explanation, Hook rattled on till he had attracted the greater part of the company in a

circle round him, and some considerable time elapsed ere the old gentleman was able to catch the attention of the agreeable stranger.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said, contriving at last to get in a word, "but your name, sir,—I did not quite catch it—servants are so abominably incorrect—and I am really a little at a loss—"

"Don't apologise, I beg," graciously replied Theodore, "Smith,—my name is Smith—and as you justly observe, servants are always making some stupid blunder or another, I remember a remarkable instance, &c."

"But really, my dear sir," continued the host at the termination of the story illustrative of stupidity in servants, "I think the mistake on the present occasion does not originate in the source you allude to, I certainly did not anticipate the pleasure of Mr. Smith's company at dinner to-day."

"No, I dare say not—you said *four* in your note, I know, and it is now, I see, a quarter past five—you are a little fast by the way—but the fact is, I have been detained in the city—as I was about to explain when—"

"Pray," exclaimed the other, as soon as he could stay the volubility of his guest, "whom, may I ask, do you suppose you are addressing?"

"Whom? why Mr. Thompson, of course,—old friend of my father. I have not the pleasure, indeed, of being personally known to you, but having received your kind invitation yesterday, on my arrival from Liverpool,—Frith-street—four o'clock—family party—come in boots—you see I have taken you at

your word. I am only afraid I have kept you waiting."

"No, no! not at all. But permit me to observe, my dear sir, my name is not exactly Thompson, it is Jones, and—"

"Jones!" repeated the *soi-disant* Smith, in admirably assumed consternation, "Jones!—why surely I cannot have—yes I must—Good Heaven! I see it all! My *dear* sir, what an unfortunate blunder—wrong house—what must you think of such an intrusion!—I am really at a loss for words in which to apologize—you will permit me to retire at present, and to-morrow—"

"Pray don't think of retiring," exclaimed the hospitable old gentleman, "your friend's table must have been cleared long ago if, as you say, four was the hour named, and I am only too happy to be able to offer you a seat at mine."

Hook, of course, could not hear of such a thing—could not think of trespassing upon the kindness of a perfect stranger—if too late for Thompson, there were plenty of chop-houses at hand—the unfortunate part of the business was, he had made an appointment with a gentleman to call for him at ten o'clock. The good-natured Jones, however, positively refused to allow so entertaining a visitor to withdraw dinnerless. Mrs. Jones joined in solicitation, the Misses Jones smiled bewitchingly, and at last Mr. Smith, who soon recovered from his confusion, was prevailed upon to offer his arm to one of the ladies, and take his place at "the well-furnished board."

In all probability the family of Jones never passed

such an evening before; Hook naturally exerted himself to the utmost to keep the party in an unceasing roar of laughter, and make good the first impression. The mirth grew fast and furious, when by way of a *coup de grace*, he seated himself at the piano-forte, and struck off into one of those extemporaneous effusions which had filled more critical judges than the Joneses with delight and astonishment. Ten o'clock struck, and on Mr. Terry being announced, his triumphant friend wound up the performance with the explanatory stanza:—

“ I am very much pleased with your fare,
Your cellar 's as prime as your cook ;—
My friend 's Mr. Terry, the player,
And I 'm Mr. Theodore Hook ! ”

Such we believe to be the true version of the story; such, at least, was somewhat the manner in which Hook used to tell it.

A friend has supplied us with another veritable case, in which “*Le Gastronomes sans argent*” was performed with equal success and applause, and in which he himself formed one of the *dramatis personæ*. Hook, on this occasion, had induced some good natured man to lend him a horse and gig, and he accordingly called on the gentleman in question inviting him to join in an excursion into the country. The weather was fine, and off started the pair in the highest possible spirits, though not with the clearest ideas as to whither they were to go, or on what particular object bent. However onwards they sped, and some two or three hours past noon found themselves

in the neighbourhood of Ruislip, near Uxbridge: in obedience to certain internal monitions they now began to cast their eyes about in search of some snug hostelry which might give promise of "good entertainment for man and horse."

"By the way," said Hook to his companion; "of course you have got some money with you?" A most melancholy negative was given by the respondent: "Not a sixpence—not a *sous*." Hook was in the same predicament, the last turnpike had exhausted his finances. It was an awkward business, what was to be done! Dine they must, and so must the nag, though it might be difficult under the circumstances, to induce mine host of the "Red Lion," or "Blue Boar," as the case might be, to see the necessity.

"Stay!" said Hook suddenly reining up; "do you see that house—pretty little villa isn't it? Cool and comfortable—lawn like a billiard-table: suppose we dine there?" The suggestion was capital, nothing could be more to the taste of his friend.

"You know the owner then?" inquired he.

"Not the least in the world," was the reply. "I never saw him in all my life; but that's of no consequence: I know his name, it's E—w, the celebrated chronometer-maker; the man who got the 10,000*l*. premium from government, and then wound up his affairs and his watches, and retired from business. He will be delighted to see us." So saying up he drove to the door. "Is Mr. E—at home?" Answer, "Yes!" In they went. The old tradesman appeared, and after a little staring at each other, Hook began:—

"Mr. E—w, happening to pass through your

neighbourhood, I could not deny myself the pleasure and honour of paying my respects to you : I am conscious that it may seem impertinent, but your celebrity overcame in me regard for the common forms of society, and I, and my friend here, were resolved, come what might, to have it in our power to say that we had seen you, and enjoyed, for a few minutes, the company of an individual famous throughout the civilized world."

"The flame was lighted, the moth was on the wing!"

The blush of an honest pride mantled on the old man's countenance ; shaking of hands followed, a few more compliments, a little chat and presently the remark, "But, gentlemen, you are far from town—it's getting late, pray do me the honour of staying and dining, quite as we say in the family way—now pray, gentlemen, *do* stay."

The two visitors consulted gravely for a minute, and then protested, "that it was quite impossible,—they must return to town," Hook adding a little more, of what *Sam Slick* denominates the *soft sawder*, which served to elicit a still more pressing invitation from the gratified chronometer-maker. The pair were at length graciously pleased to condescend to his request, and agreed to partake *sans cérémonie* of his plain roast, which was already giving odour, and to join him in the discussion of a bottle of "Barnes's best." The dinner dispatched, the bottle, multiplied by six, was emptied, and the host made the while as merry and as happy as a king, nor would he allow his

new friends to depart save under solemn pledges of repeating their visit at the first opportunity. The old gentleman, after all, had by no means the worst of the joke. When we remember how men used to cluster, at the clubs, round the well-known corner for the mere chance of picking up crumbs of conversation, an evening spent in the society of two such wits will not appear dearly purchased at the expense of a few slices of "South Down," and some half-dozen extracts from the favourite bin.

But the day's adventures were not yet concluded; on arriving at Hammersmith, on the way home, the horse, who had probably been as hospitably entertained as his *pro tempore* masters, began to rear, and shewed symptoms of an inclination for a freak, which he eventually indulged by snapping the shafts, and kicking the body of the vehicle to pieces. Happily, neither of the travellers were injured, and leaving the animal and shattered gig at an inn they returned safely to town per stage.

Rural wanderings into the "bowels of the earth," in search of the sublime and the ridiculous, were at this time much in fashion with Hook, and a knot of intimates—and what a knot it was! Mathews, Terry, Tom Hill, Mr. Higginson, and he, the sole survivor, who yet flourishes full of wit and vivacity as ever, the *Duberly* of "Gilbert Gurney!" Much material of mirth, afterwards to be worked up for the delectation of the public, was in this manner obtained both by author and actor. *Inter alia* the state of the metropolitan roads, the abundance of those misanthropic eremites, the takers of toll—legalised *latrones*, before

whom the *vacuus viator* feels no disposition to sing, suggested the following sketch :—

“ Few persons can have passed through life, or London, without having experienced more or less insult from the authoritative manner and coarse language of the fellows who keep the different toll-bars round the metropolis ; but even were those persons uniformly civil and well-behaved, the innumerable demands which they are authorised to make, and the necessary frequency of their conversation and appeals to the traveller, are of themselves enough to provoke the impatience of the most placid passenger in Christendom.

“ We will select one line of about three or four miles, which will answer by way of an example of what we mean: A man, driving himself (without a servant), starts from Bishopsgate Street for Kilburn. The day is cold and rainy—his fingers are benumbed ; his two coats buttoned up ; his money in tight pantaloons-pockets ; his horse restive, apt to kick if the reins touch his tail ; his gloves soaked with wet ; and himself half-an-hour too late for dinner. He has to pull up in the middle of the street in Shoreditch, and pay a toll ;—he means to return, therefore he takes a ticket, letter A. On reaching Shoreditch Church, he turns into the Curtain-road, pulls up again, drags off his wet glove with his teeth, his other hand being fully occupied in holding up the reins and the whip ; pays again ; gets another ticket, number 482 ; drags on his glove ; buttons up his coats, and rattles away into Old-Street-road ; another gate, more pulling and poking, and unbuttoning, and squeezing. He pays, and takes another ticket, letter L. The operation of getting all to rights takes place once more, nor is it repeated until he reaches Goswell-Street-road ; here he performs all the ceremonies we have already described, for a fourth time, and gets a fourth ticket, 732, which is to clear him through the gates in the

New Road, as far as the bottom of Pentonville;—arrived there, he performs once more all the same evolutions, and procures a fifth ticket, letter X, which, unless some sinister accident occur, is to carry him clear to the Paddington-road; but opening the fine space of the Regent's Park, at the top of Portland Street, the north breeze blowing fresh from Hampstead, bursts upon his buggy, and all the tickets which he had received from all the gates which he has paid, and which he had stuffed *seriatim* between the cushion and lining of his dennet, suddenly rise, like a covey of partridges, from the corner, and he sees the dingy vouchers for his expenditure proceeding down Portland Street at full speed. They are rescued, however, muddy and filthy as they are, by the sweeper of the crossing, who is, of course, rewarded by the driver for his attention, with a larger sum than he had originally disbursed for all the gates; and when deposited again in the vehicle, not in their former order of arrangement, the unfortunate traveller spends at least ten minutes at the next gate in selecting the particular ticket which is there required to insure his free passage.

“Conquering all these difficulties, he reaches Paddington Gate, where he pays afresh, and obtains a ticket, 691, with which he proceeds swimmingly until stopped again, at Kilburn, to pay a toll, which would clear him all the way to Stanmore if he were not going to dine at a house three doors beyond this very turnpike, where he pays, for the seventh time, and where he obtains a seventh ticket, letter a.

“He dines and ‘wines;’ and the bee’s wing from the citizen’s port gives new velocity to Time. The dennet was ordered at eleven; and, although neither tides nor the old gentleman just mentioned, will wait for any man, except Tom Hill, horses and dennets will. It is nearer midnight than eleven when the visitor departs, even better buttoned up than in the morning, his lamps giving cheerfulness to the equipage, and light to

the road ; and his horse whisking along (his nostrils pouring forth breath like smoke from safety valves), and the whole affair actually in motion at the rate of ten miles per hour. Stopped at Paddington. "Pay here?"—"L."—"Won't do."—"G?"—(The horse fidgety all this time, and the driver trying to read the dirty tickets by the little light which is emitted through the *tops* of his lamps,)—"X?"—"It's no letter I tell you?"—"482,"—"No."—At this juncture the clock strikes twelve—the driver is told that his reading and rummaging are alike useless, for that a new day has begun. The coats are, therefore, unbuttoned—the gloves pulled off—the money to be fished out—the driver discovers that his last shilling was paid to the ostler at the inn, where his horse was fed, and that he must change a sovereign to pay the gate. This operation the toll-keeper performs; nor does the driver discover, until the morning, that one of the half-crowns and four of the shillings which he has received, are bad. Satisfied, however, with what has occurred, he determines at all hazards to drive home over the stones, and avoid all further importunities from the turnpike-keepers. Accordingly away he goes along Oxford Street, over the pavement, working into one hole and tumbling into another, like a ball on a *trou madame* table, until at the end of George Street, St. Giles's,—snap goes his axle-tree; away goes his horse, dashing the dennet against a post at the corner of Plumtree Street, leaving the driver with his collar-bone and left arm broken on the pavement, at the mercy of two or three popish bricklayers and a couple of women of the town, who humanely lift him to the coach-stand, and deposit him in a hackney-chariot, having previously cut off the skirts of both his coats, and relieved him, not only of his loose change, but of a gold repeater, a snuff-box, and a pocket-book full of notes and memoranda, of no use but to the owner.

"The unhappy victim at length reaches home, in agonies from the continued roughness of the pre-adamite pavement, is put to bed—doctors are sent for, the fractures are reduced, and in seven weeks he is able to crawl into his counting-house to write a cheque for a new dennet, and give his people orders to shoot his valuable horse, who has so dreadfully injured himself on the fatal night as to be past recovery."

Hook's "mononag excursions," as he called them, were occasionally prolonged to a duration of some weeks. He once made the tour of Wales in this way, accompanied by an intimate friend in the Treasury, who had provided a gig, drawn by a white horse, for the journey. Every thing passed off pleasantly enough; fine weather—magnificent scenery—a stream to be whipped one day, a mountain to be climbed the next—a mine to be explored at one spot, a Druid temple to be traced at another. Castles, cataracts, and coal-mines, all inviting inspection!

"Ah!" said Hook, as they lounged along one bright morning, "this is all very well in its way—very delightful, of course—plenty to look at—but then, somehow, nobody looks at us!—the thing is getting a little dull, don't you think so?"

His companion assented. "Well, we can't go on in this manner," continued the other, "I must hit upon something, and get up a *digito monstrari* somehow or another."

And at the next town from which they started, his friend had a taste of his quality in that line, for having procured a box of large black wafers, he had completely spotted the snowy coat of the animal they

were driving, after the pattern of those wooden quadrupeds which, before the diffusion of useful knowledge, used to form the studs of childhood. The device fully answered its purpose, and the happy pair drove off, attracting, throughout the remainder of the day, the gaze, wonder, and unqualified admiration of Cadwallader and all his goats.

When confined to the neighbourhood of town, the drive not unfrequently terminated with a dinner at the cottage of his old friend, Mr. Hill, at Sydenham. Here, especially on the Sunday, a small party of congenial spirits, "fit though few," used constantly to assemble. The house being small, the company never exceeded a dozen, and, with the exception of Mrs. Mathews, who seems to have been voted a bachelor for the occasion, consisted entirely of gentlemen. Among them might be numbered the brightest wits of the day. The merry-hearted little host himself, who discharged the office of the whetstone rather than the razor, as *Paul Pry*, *Mr. Hull*, the hero of *Little Pedlington* and Morning Chronicler of the great American sea serpent, has been brought so continually before the public, that

"Not to know him argues thyself unknown." *

His curiosity and habits of "prying" are hardly to be described, and are quite beyond the reach of cari-

* He is thus described in the second volume of "Gilbert Gurney:"—

"Hull—for so was my warm-hearted friend—was a very extraordinary person. He knew the business of every body in

cature. No matter what the subject or whence the source ; whether an *on dit* of club-house origin, or a bit of domestic gossip wormed out of an esurient school-boy at a pastry cook's shop, it was all food for his craving appetite. "Pooh ! pooh ! it's all information, you know !" Nothing too lofty for his capacity or too minute for his attention.

"W—n, my dear boy," said he one day to an acquaintance whom he had seized by the button, "how are you all at home ; how are all the little W.'s ?"

"Why, my daughter, for I have but one child, is quite well, I thank you."

"Only one ! pooh ! pooh ! don't tell me, you've half a dozen, at least. I happen to know it."

"Half a dozen !" repeated his friend, in astonishment, "all I can say is, that I had but one when I left home, and I really was not aware that there was any probability of so alarming an addition to my family."

"Nonsense, my dear boy, you can't deceive *me*. I passed by your house last Wednesday, and as I

London better than the people themselves. He happened to know every thing that was going forward in all circles—mercantile, political, fashionable, literary or theatrical ; in addition to all matters connected with military and naval affairs, agriculture, finance, art and science—everything came alike to him ; to *his* inquiring eye no mystery continued undiscovered ;—from his attentive ear no secret remained concealed. He was plump, short, with an intelligent countenance, and near-sighted, with a constitution and complexion fresh enough to look forty, at a time when I believed him to be at least four times the age. We had a joke against him in those days as to his antiquity, in which he heartily and good-humouredly joined, until at last we got him to admit—and I almost think, believe—that he had sold gunpowder to King Charles II., and dined more than once with the witty Lord Rochester."

happened to look down through the kitchen window, I saw nine slices of bread and butter ready cut for tea. One little girl can't eat nine slices of bread and butter, you know, my dear boy; pooh! pooh!"

The mystery was explained, by the fact of the said Wednesday having been the birth-day of the young lady, on which occasion she had given a *conversazione* to a few juvenile friends in the neighbourhood.

Another peep in the same direction has been versified by George Colman, under the title of "The Haunch of Venison." Hill, invited to dine at No. 1, sees a magnificent haunch on the spit at No. 2. Unable to resist the temptation, he knocks at the first door:—"Give my compliments—very sorry—aunt taken alarmingly ill—must be off into Surrey." Calls at the house adjoining, where he is equally at home:—"Just dropped in to take pot-luck in a quiet way." An hour passes and an Irish stew is at length put upon table. Tom declines. "Pooh, pooh! my dear boy! I shall wait for the venison—I saw it—glorious haunch, the first of the season." "Oh, that," replies the host, "belongs to my neighbour, next door, he has people to dine with him, and as—

" His chimney smoked—the scene to change,
I let him have my kitchen range
Whilst his was newly polished;
The ven'son you observed below,
Went home just half-an-hour ago;
I guess it's now demolished."

But it would be an endless task to attempt to give all the stories, good and true, of a similar kind,

whereof this singular being was the hero. One more may suffice.

He had been, with a couple of friends, paying a short visit at the villa of Sir P— D—e; on the morning fixed for the departure of the party, Sir P— pressed them strongly to remain another day, and succeeded in overruling the objections of the others, but Hill was firm, unshakable as his namesakes:— “No, he must return to town, and to town return he would.” Finding it useless to urge the matter further, and not choosing to suffer him to take his journey alone, his two companions, with some little reluctance, however, took their places in the post-chaise.

“What on earth, Hill,” asked one, as soon as they had got clear of the gates, “could make you so absurdly obstinate? You are the only one of the three who has no engagement—no business—nothing to call you away; why not stop?”

“He didn’t want us to stop,” replied Tom.

“Nonsense,” said the other, “no man could have been more kind, or more hospitable in his invitation; he was clearly annoyed at our leaving him.”

“He was no such thing,” persisted Hill, “I tell you he didn’t want us to stop, and he is very glad we are gone—I happen to know it.”

“But why doubt the man’s sincerity? there was no need to press us, and he did so with every appearance of being in earnest!”

“Pooh!” said the imperturbable Hill, “I know better; I am not to be taken in; I tell you I was up before any body else in the house, and I just took a

look into the larder, *and he had got nothing for dinner!* Don't tell *me*, he *didn't* mean us to stop!"

It cannot be doubted that the habit, in which he persevered to the last, of being "up before any body else in the house," contributed in no small degree to that freshness of face, for "'Twas in the grain, sir; 't would endure wind and weather," and that juvenility of form which drew down the ceaseless raillery of his associates. One hinted that he was no other than the wandering Jew; another suggested that he was one of the skipping little hills alluded to by David, while the most moderate, confessing that his early life was involved in obscurity, declared that the first authentic piece of intelligence respecting him was, that he held a small post about the court in the time of Charles the Second; but that, from what he once inadvertently let fall, it was probable he was privy to, if not an accomplice in the Gunpowder Plot. That he was intimate with the "man in the iron mask," and had furnished information to the various authors of *Junius*, was universally admitted. All this and more besides he bore, from those who were privileged to take the liberty, and from many who were not, with unwincing good temper; and appeared never more happy than when contributing, in any way to the amusement of his "dear boys," Hook, Mathews, &c.

He suffered severe pecuniary losses towards the close of his career, but at the time of which we are writing was the comparatively affluent and superlatively hospitable owner of the Sydenham villa. It was from this spot that the little band before mentioned, started to enjoy the delights of Croydon Fair.

Here Hook, at the theatre, whither they had repaired, drew the attention of the performers and the audience to the presence of Mathews, as the original representative of *Mathew Daw*, the principal character in the piece being performed on the stage; * and afterwards, on their visiting the booth, Mr. Richardson kindly complimented the said well-known "Mr. Mathies" with a free admission: "you know, sir, we never take money from one another,"—the former incident as painful to the modesty as the latter was irritating to the pride of that sensitive individual. The performances over, the party adjourned to a "long room" at one of the inns, filled with all sorts of people carousing. Hook and Mathews now got up a mock quarrel—each appealing most earnestly to the sympathy of the company who, with the true British predilection for anything in the shape of a "row," eagerly espoused the side of one or other of the champions. The contest proceeded, Hook's cool invectives grew more and more cutting, and the gesticulations of Mathews more wild and extravagant; blows followed, and the partizans, full of gin and valour, soon followed the example of their principals—a general *mêlée* succeeded, candles were knocked out, tables and chairs overthrown, the glasses "sparkled on the boards," and in the midst of the confusion, just in time to avoid the "arrival of the police and impressive *dénouement*," the promoters of the riot, unobserved, effected their escape, leaving their excitable adherents to compute at leisure the amount of damage done to their persons and property, and to explain,

* *Vide* "Memoirs of Charles Mathews," vol. ii. p. 39.

if possible, to a magistrate in the morning, the cause and object of the combat.

Everybody has heard of the ingenious manner in which Sheridan evaded payment of a considerable sum for coach-hire, by inveigling Richardson into the vehicle, getting up a quarrel, no very difficult matter, then jumping out in disgust, and leaving his irritable friend to recover his composure and pay the fare. Hook, who, like all men of genius, augmented the resources of his own wit by a judicious borrowing from that of others, seems to have caught at this idea when once, under similar circumstances, he found himself, after a long and agreeable ride, without money to satisfy the coachman—a friend happened to be passing—he was hailed and taken up—but unfortunately proved to be, on inquiry, as unprepared for any pecuniary transaction as Theodore himself. A dull copyist would have broken down at once, but with a promptitude and felicity of conception that amply redeem the plagiarism, with whatever else he may be left chargeable, Hook pulled the check-string and bade the driver proceed as rapidly as possible to No. —, — Street, at the West End of the town, the residence of a well-known “surgeon, &c.” Arrived, he ordered the coachman to “knock and ring,” as desired, with energy, and on the door opening, told his friend to follow, and hastily entered the house. “Mr. —, is he at home? I must see him immediately!” Mr. — soon made his appearance, when Hook, in an agitated and hurried tone, commenced:—

“My dear sir, I trust you are disengaged!” Mr.

— bowed. “Thank heaven!—pardon my incoherence, sir,—make allowance for the feelings of a husband—perhaps a father—your attendance, sir, is instantly required—*instantly*—by Mrs. —, No. —, &c., pray lose not a moment, it is a *very* peculiar case, I assure you.”

“I will start directly,” replied the medical man, “I have only to run up stairs, get my apparatus, and step into my carriage.”

“Ah! exactly,” returned Hook, “but I am in agony till I see you fairly off—don’t think of ordering out your own carriage—here’s one at the door—jump into that.”

Mr. —, with a great mahogany case under his arm, made the jump, and quickly found himself at the house to which he had been directed; it was the abode of a very stiff-mannered, middle-aged, maiden lady, not unknown to Hook; one, moreover to whom he owed a grudge, a kind of debt he rarely failed to pay. The doctor was admitted, but on explaining the object of his visit, soon found it convenient to make a precipitate retreat from the claws of the infuriate spinster into the arms of the hackney-coachman, who deposited him in safety at his own door, which, however, he declined quitting without the full amount of his fare.*

* We are reminded of a yet more abominable trick played off some four or five years since upon a celebrated practitioner residing in the neighbourhood of the Horse Guards, by a party of lively young gentlemen, one of whom was not altogether satisfied with the treatment he had met at the hands of his medical friend. Between the hours of one and two in the morning an omnibus stopped at the house of the gentleman in question. Raps, ringings, and

But the most inexcusable and most mischievous—far more so, probably, in the event than its contrivers anticipated—of all these youthful pranks was the gigantic “Berners-street Hoax,” perpetrated in 1809. Not merely, in this case, were the comforts of a single family suspended, or a few movables demolished, but a quarter of the town was disturbed—a whole street was thrown into a state of uproar, which lasted from morning till night—hundreds of individuals, servants, artisans, tradesmen, great and small, from all parts of London, professional men of every class,

kicks soon brought a half-dressed servant to the door, and Mr. — himself in his *robe de chambre* to the stair. ‘Come down directly, make haste for heaven’s sake!—here is a man dying in a fit in an omnibus.’ ‘I’ll just dress, and then—’ ‘Shame! shame!’ roared the party from below; ‘the man’s dying!—fetch him down, push him down—make him come at once!’ Seeing the determination of his summoners, Mr. — hastily snatched up a case of lancets, hurried to the vehicle, placed his foot on the step, and was the next instant, by a skilful application of the shoulder of the conductor, plunged into the interior; ‘bang’ went the door. ‘All r-right’ was the word, and off went the omnibus rattling and clattering through the streets at the rate of sixteen miles the hour. Somewhere near the Haymarket it ‘pulled up,’ and Mr. — was uncartered like an Easter stag, ‘his streamers waving in the wind,’ to the great sport of a rather mixed company that was assembled to receive him. Hackney-coaches and policemen are fortunately not rare in that locality, and by their aid an escape was soon effected. Whether, however, he was unable to discover the perpetrators of the ‘abominable outrage,’ whether he knew them too well, or whether he thought that in the course of an inquiry the laugh might chance to run against him, whatever the verdict might do, he appears to have been content to let the matter rest, and not to have followed his first incautious step by any of a graver nature.

not to speak of princes, potentates, and nobles of high degree, swelled the catalogue of the victims; the police were employed to trace out the delinquents; rewards were offered for their apprehension. Neither the "Cock-lane Ghost," nor the Cato-street conspiracy, produced a greater amount of popular excitement, or furnished a more abundant crop of "latest particulars." A previous trick of the kind had been played, on a smaller scale, upon an unfortunate Quaker, by Hook alone, and the success which attended it, probably led to a more complete development of the idea. On this occasion, however, the confederates, Mr. H—— and Mrs. ——, a celebrated actress still alive, were called into council; six weeks were spent in preparation, during which time about four thousand letters were dispatched, all, under various pretences, inviting the several recipients to call on a certain day at the house of a Mrs. Tottenham, a lady of property, residing at No. 54, Berners-street, and who had, on some account, fallen under the displeasure of this formidable trio.

Scarce had the eventful morning begun to break, ere the neighbourhood resounded with the cries of "sweep," uttered in every variety of tone, and proceeding from crowds of sooty urchins and their masters, who had assembled by five o'clock beneath the windows of the devoted No. 54. In the midst of the wrangling of the rival professors, and protestations of the repudiating housemaid, heavy waggons laden with chaldrons of coals from the different wharves, came rumbling up the street, blockading the thoroughfare, impeding one another, crushing and struggling to

reach the same goal, amid a hurricane of imprecations from the respective *conducteurs*. Now among the gathering crowd, cleanly, cook-like men were to be seen, cautiously making their way, each with a massive wedding-cake under his arm; tailors, boot-makers, upholders, undertakers with coffins, draymen with beer-barrels, &c., succeeded in shoals, and long before the cumbrous coal-waggons were enabled to move off, about a dozen travelling chariots and four, all ready for the reception of as many "happy pairs," came dashing up to the spot. Medical men with instruments for the amputation of limbs, attorneys prepared to cut off entails, clergymen summoned to minister to the mind, and artists engaged to pourtray the features of the body, unable to draw near in vehicles, plunged manfully into the mob. Noon came, and with it about forty fishmongers, bearing forty "cod and lobsters," as many butchers, with an equal number of legs of mutton, and as the confusion reached its height, and the uproar became terrific, and the consternation of the poor old lady grew to be bordering on temporary insanity, up drove the great Lord Mayor himself—state carriage, cocked hats, silk stockings, bag wigs and all, to the intense gratification of Hook and his two associates, who, snugly ensconced in an apartment opposite, were witnessing the triumph of their scheme.

All this, perhaps, was comparatively common-place, and within the range of a mediocre "joker of jokes." There were features, however, in the Berners-street hoax, independently of its originality, which distinguished it for wit and *méchanceté*, far above any of the

numberless imitations to which it gave rise. Every family, it is said, has its secret, some point tender to the touch, some circumstance desirable to be suppressed; according to the proverb "there is a skeleton in every house," and as a matter of course the more eminent and conspicuous the master of the house, the more busy are men's tongues with his private affairs, and the more likely are they to get scent of any concealed subject of annoyance. Completely familiar with London gossip, and by no means scrupulous in the use of any information he might possess, Hook addressed a variety of persons of consideration, taking care to introduce allusion to some peculiar point sure of attracting attention, and invariably closing with an invitation to No. 54, Berners-street. Certain revelations to be made respecting a complicated system of fraud pursued at the Bank of England, brought the Governor of that establishment, a similar device was employed to allure the Chairman of the East India Company, while the Duke of Gloucester started off with his equerry to receive a communication from a dying woman, formerly a confidential attendant on His Royal Highness's mother. His were the royal liveries conspicuous on the occasion, the Duke of York was not, we have reason to believe, included in the hoax.

The consequences of this affair threatened to be serious, many of the beguiled tradesmen and others, who had suffered in person or in purse, took active measures towards bringing the charge home to the principal offender, who was pretty generally suspected. Such, however, was the precaution that had been observed,

that the attempt proved fruitless, and the inquiry fell to the ground, and Theodore Hook, after a temporary visit to the country, returned unmolested, and more famous than ever, to his usual occupations. The following account, short and imperfect as it is, extracted from one of the morning papers of the day, may not be without interest :—

A HOAX.—This very malignant species of wit was yesterday most successfully practised at the house of Mrs. T——, a lady of fortune, at No. 54, Berners-street, which was beset by about a dozen tradespeople at one time, with their various commodities, and from the confusion altogether, such crowds had collected as to render the street impassable. Waggon's laden with coals from the Paddington wharves, upholsterers' goods in cart-loads, organs, pianofortes, linen, jewellery, and every other description of furniture, were lodged as near as possible to the door of No. 54, with anxious tradespeople and a laughing mob. About this time, the Lord Mayor arrived in his carriage, but his lordship's stay was short, and he was driven to Marlborough-street police-office. At the office, his lordship informed the sitting magistrate that he had received a note purporting to come from Mrs. T——, which stated that she had been summoned to appear before him, but that she was confined to her room by sickness, and requested his lordship would do her the favour to call on her. Berners-street was, at this time, in the greatest confusion, by the multiplicity of tradespeople, who were returning with their goods, and spectators laughing at them. The officers at Marlborough-street office were immediately ordered out to keep order, but it was impossible for a short time. The first thing witnessed by the officers was six stout men bearing an organ, surrounded by wine-porters with permits, barbers with wigs, mantua-makers with band-

boxes, opticians with the various articles of their trade, and such was the pressure of tradespeople who had been duped, that at four o'clock all was still confusion. Every officer that could be mustered was enlisted to disperse the people, and they were placed at the corners of Berners-street, to prevent tradespeople from advancing towards the house with goods. The street was not cleared at a late hour, as servants of every description, wanting places, began to assemble at five o'clock. It turned out that letters had been written to the different tradespeople, which stated recommendations from persons of quality. This *hoax* exceeded by far that in Bedford-street, a few months since, for, besides a coffin which was brought to Mrs. T——'s house, made to measure, agreeable to letter, five feet six by sixteen inches, there were accoucheurs, tooth-drawers, miniature painters, and artists of every description."*

* Thus speaks Daly, "Gurney's" double :—I am the man—I did it ; sent a Lord Mayor in state to relieve impressed seamen, philosophers, and sages, to look at children with two heads apiece," &c. "Copy the joke and it ceases to *be* one—any fool can imitate an example once set ; but for originality of thought and design, I *do* think that was perfect." Vol. ii.

CHAPTER IV.

MR. HOOK'S FIRST NOVEL.—MATRICULATION AT OXFORD.—SCENE WITH THE PROCTOR. — "THE COCKNEY UNIVERSITY."—GEORGE COLMAN AND THE "ROMAN HISTORY." — ANECDOTE. — DEATH OF MRS. WALL.—INTRODUCTION TO HIGH LIFE.—REV. EDWARD CANNON. — ANECDOTES OF HIM.—HOOK'S POWER OF MEMORY. —THE PRECESSION OF THE EQUINOXES. — FABLE OF THE TWO DOGS.—LETTER FROM CANNON.—"THE DEAN," IMPROMPTU.

INSTANCES of purely voluntary abdication are rare in the page of history, and perhaps the case of an author abandoning a style of composition well adapted to his taste and equally agreeable to that of those whom he may have addressed is not much more frequent. Far more likely is he to run into the opposite extreme, and to work out a favourite vein to exhaustion, repeating himself and reproducing, at each time, a *progeniem vitiosiore*m of any fortunate creation. The warmth of popular applause,—though the pitiless storm of the critic may not be equally effectual—will often be sufficient to turn a man from his original bent and inclination, and permanently fix him in a line of writing into which he deviated accidentally at first, and wherein he by no means considers his strength to lie. An exception to what then almost amounts to a general rule is presented to our notice by Theodore Hook. Successful beyond the most sanguine expectation as a dramatist, with actors at hand, and

those his personal friends, most eager and the best qualified to give expression to his ideas, he stopped suddenly in his theatrical career, at a time of life when few men would have ventured to enter upon it.

He was barely twenty-one when, declining to write for the stage, he commenced as a novelist, and to say the truth, his *coup d'essai*, "The Man of Sorrow," published under the pseudonym of *Alfred Allendale*, brought with it but little encouragement to proceed. In point of fact so little attention did the work excite, that he was enabled, some years afterwards, to present it, condensed and remodelled, as illustrative of the proverb, "Many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip," in "Sayings and Doings." The hero in the original, as in the second version, is, almost from his birth, the very sport of fortune; one against whom the tide of luck sets with an unvarying and irresistible current; in small things as in great,—from the staining his face at a grand dinner-party by wiping it with a wet D'Oiley,—"The discovery was mortifying, though the incident proved that he had come from the dinner-table with *flying colours*,"—to the crowning misery, the accidentally shooting his bride as they are on the point of starting for the honey-moon, every thing goes wrong. At the very outset he loses an affectionate mother, and here, as in a later work before spoken of, the writer's own feelings, expressed almost in the same words, break forth with a distinctness touching, and almost painful:—"He never lost remembrance of that awful scene—The sable hearse—the drawing of the cords that lowered her to earth,—the rattling dust thrown in upon her coffin."

It is unnecessary to follow the unhappy *Musgrave* through the farcical series of misadventures which meet him at every chapter,—and yet it must be confessed, that after all, the absurdity consists rather in the multiplicity and rapid succession of these mishaps than in any want of tact in the bringing them about. Even in this early work, Hook exhibits much of that remarkable facility in developing what he terms the “wheel within wheel system,” which especially distinguishes his later productions.

Few writers shew themselves more thoroughly possessed of the idea that there are no such things in the world as trifles—few more happy in the application of the maxim to fictitious narrative. His effects flow from causes however remote, in a manner singularly natural and easy—he loves to touch, at starting, upon some spring seemingly insignificant and exhibit the extensive and complicated machinery set in motion by the vibration. In the present case, and perhaps in some others, the habit of referring striking and important incidents to matters of mere accident is indulged in too freely. The fault, if it be one, is more or less perceptible in all his novels. There are charges, however, of a graver nature which might be substantiated against the “Man of Sorrow;” but let them pass; no one could be more alive to its blemishes than the author himself, who when he alluded to it, which was not often, always spoke of it as the crude work of a very young man, carelessly, and, in some places, very loosely written. He had suffered it to get out of print, not even possessing a copy himself.*

* It has been reprinted since his death, in three scanty volumes.

It abounds, as a matter of course, in play upon words; for example, a rejected suitor's taking to drinking, is accounted for on the plea that "it is natural an unsuccessful lover should be given to *whine*," a pun, by the way, better conveyed in the name "*Negus*," which he is said to have bestowed upon a favourite, but offending, dog. There are also introduced a couple of tolerably well-sketched portraits, *Mr. Minus*, the poet (T. Moore), and *Sir Joseph Jonquil* (Banks). An epigram, referring to the celebrated duel of the former with Jeffrey,* in consequence of an article in No. 16, of the *Edinburgh Review*, is worth repeating, the more so, as its paternity has been subject of dispute, the majority attributing it to one of the authors of "*Rejected Addresses*!"—

"When Anacreon would fight, as the poets have said,
 A reverse he displayed in his vapour,
 For while all his poems were loaded with lead,
 His pistols were loaded with paper;
 For excuses, Anacreon old custom may thank,
 Such a *salvo* he should not abuse,
 For the cartridge, by rule, is always made blank
 Which is fired away at *Reviews*."

But the most peculiar feature in this juvenile production of Hook's, is the frequent and indiscriminate

* The parties, it will be remembered, were arrested on the ground, and conveyed to Bow Street; the pistols on examination were found to contain merely the charge of powder; the balls had disappeared! Byron alludes to the circumstance:

"When *Little's* leadless pistol met his eye,
 And Bow Street myrmidons stood laughing by."

use of classical quotation. He seems to have emptied the contents of his Harrow common-place book over the pages, which are accordingly studded here and there with scraps from a host of authors Greek and Latin, ancient and mediæval, with whom in after life he did not think it necessary to keep on terms of great intimacy; not, however, that there is the slightest ground for supposing that at any period he lost the distinguishing traits of an educated man. In all probability, the somewhat pedantic display in question, common enough with boys fresh from a public school, originated in his having occasion about this time to "brush up" his Homer and Virgil, by way of preparing for a sojourn at the University.

He had been already entered at St. Mary's Hall. His friends would have preferred a residence at Exeter College, but to this, as entailing a somewhat more strict observance of discipline than was compatible with his habits, he himself, averse from the proceeding altogether, positively objected. A compromise was effected, and he was placed under the charge of his brother, and presented by him to the Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Parsons, Head of Baliol, and afterwards Bishop of Peterborough, for "Matriculation." The ceremony was well nigh stopped, *in limine*, in consequence of a piece of facetiousness on the part of the candidate, ill-timed, to say the least of it. On being asked if he was prepared to subscribe to the Thirty-nine Articles?

"Oh, certainly, sir," replied Theodore, "*forty* if you please."

The horror of the Vice-Chancellor may be imagined. The young gentleman was desired to withdraw; and

it required all the interest of his brother, who fortunately happened to be a personal friend of Dr. Parsons, to induce the latter to overlook the offence. The joke, such as it is, was probably picked out of one of Foote's farces, who makes *Mrs. Simony*, if we mistake not, say, when speaking of her husband the Doctor, (intended for the unfortunate Dr. Dodd,) "He believes in *all* the Thirty-nine Articles, ay, and so he would if there were forty of them."

We have heard another instance of Oxford impudence attributed to Hook, but not, as in the preceding case, from his own lips, nor will we venture to vouch for its authenticity. On the evening of his arrival at the University, says our friend, he contrived to give his brother the slip, and joined a party of old school-fellows in a carouse at one of the taverns. Sundry bowls of "Bishop," and of a popular compound yclept "Egg-flip"—the Cambridge men call it "Silky," to the *nondum graduati* of Oxford it is known by a *nomen accidentale* which we have forgotten,—having been discussed; songs, amatory and Bacchanalian, having been sung with full choruses; and altogether the jocularities having begun to pass "the limit of becoming mirth," the Proctor made his appearance; and, advancing to the table at which the "Freshman"—so in every sense of the word—was presiding, put the usual question,—

"Pray, sir, are you a member of this University?"

"No, sir," replied Hook, rising and bowing respectfully. "Pray, sir, are you?"

A little disconcerted at the extreme gravity of the other, the Proctor held out his ample sleeve—"You see this, sir?"

"Ah," returned Hook, having examined the fabric with great earnestness for a few seconds, "Yes! I perceive—Manchester velvet—and may I take the liberty, sir, of inquiring how much you might have paid per yard for the article?"

The quiet imperturbability of manner with which this was uttered was more than the Rev. Gentleman could stand; and, muttering something about "supposing it was a mistake," he effected a retreat, amid shouts of laughter from Hook's companions, in which the other occupants of the coffee-room, the waiters, and even his own "bull-dogs," were constrained to join.

It must be sufficiently evident to the reader, that a youth, or rather *per legem universitatis*, a man of Mr. Theodore Hook's free and easy disposition, utterly unaccustomed too as he was to any kind or measure of restraint—the companion of wits and "men about town," was not likely to become a very tractable son of *alma mater*, or to look up with any great degree of deference to the dull and dignified *domini et magistri* placed in authority over him. Even the lax rules of "St. Mary" would have soon been found to yield "too small a bound" for such a soul. Luckily, perhaps, for both parties, an unlooked-for turn in his affairs enabled him to quit Oxford, after a residence of one, or at most a couple of terms, if with no great accession of honour or wisdom, at least without censure.

Brief however as was his stay "among the groves of Academus," it was enough to leave lasting traces in his heart of that reverential feeling with which few who have trodden them have departed unimpressed, and to inspire a proportionate contempt, pretty plainly mani-

fested, for those modern institutions, which however serviceable in their way, are certainly woefully deficient in that classic grace and those associations which hallow the old seats of learning on the banks of Cam and Isis. One might as well expect a subaltern of the "Tenth" to "fraternize" with the officers of a "Spanish Legion," as an Oxford undergraduate to admit the pretensions of his brethren of the Strand and Gower-street. There may be the same buttons and bravery in the one case—the same prize-poems and trencher-caps in the other—nay, as is we believe the fact, the more recently organized bodies may even boast a greater luxuriance of lace, and a larger amplitude of tassel, but the *prestige* is wanting. These subjects afforded, each, a mark too fair to be neglected by the watchful Theodore, whose private prejudice on the occasion might lend an additional impetus to his political feeling. *Cedant arma togæ.* We give a stanza or two from—

THE COCKNEY UNIVERSITY.

- "Come bustle, my neighbours, give over your labours,
 Leave digging, and delving, and churning;
 New lights are preparing to set you a staring,
 And fill all your noddles with learning.
 Each dustman shall speak both in Latin and Greek,
 And tinkers beat bishops in knowledge
 If the opulent tribe will consent to subscribe
 To build up a new Cockney College.
- "We've had bubbles in milk, we've had bubbles in silk,
 And bubbles in baths of sea-water;
 With other mad schemes, of railroads and steams,
 Of tombstones and places for slaughter—

But none are so sure, so snug and secure,
 As this for which now we are burning,
 For 'tis noble and wise to rub the world's eyes,
 And set all the journeymen learning.

* * * * *

" This College, when formed, established, endowed,
 Will astonish each Radical's grannam,
 She may place her young fry in the midst of the crowd,
 For two pounds ten shillings per annum.
 And, oh, what a thing for a lad who climbs flues,
 Or for one who picks pockets of purses,
 To woo, in Ionic and Attic, the Muse,
 And make quires of bad Latin verses !

" Hackney-coachmen from *Swift* shall reply, if you feel
 Annoyed at being needlessly shaken ;
 And butchers, of course, be flippant from *Steele*,
 And pig-drivers well versed in *Bacon*—
 From *Locke*, shall the blacksmiths, authority crave,
 And gas-men cite *Coke* at discretion—
 Undertakers talk *Gay* as they go to the *Grave*,
 And watermen *Rowe* by profession."

Among Hook's early associates, was old George Colman the younger, and of the first evening spent in the society of that distinguished wit, the former used to give an amusing anecdote. They had been sitting together for some hours, and their potations the while had probably not been confined to that agreeably beverage

" Which cheers but not inebriates ;"

and to which, by the way, Hook "entertained the profoundest objection," when the great dramatist,

fixing his eyes upon his young companion, and ever and anon taking a sip from his glass, as he regarded him, began to mutter, "Very odd, very strange indeed! wonderful precocity of genius! astonishing diligence and assiduity! You must be a very extraordinary young man. Why, sir," he continued, raising his voice, "you can hardly yet have reached your twenty-first birth-day?"

"I have just passed it," said the other, "*vingt un* overdrawn."

"Ah! very good," replied Colman, "but, sir, pray tell me, how the d—l did you contrive to find time to write that terribly long Roman history?"

A similar story is told of a certain popular poet, one drawing somewhat less upon our credulity; he was in a bookseller's shop at Paris, and his companion quitting him for a short time, to join a couple of handsome and fashionable looking young ladies, who were engaged in turning over the "new publications," Mr.— soon observed the attention of one of the *belles dames* to be directed towards himself, and could scarcely fail to discover that he was forming the subject of conversation among the party. On the return of his friend, he not unnaturally inquired what was the nature of the remarks that had been evidently made upon him—"I saw distinctly that they—especially the taller one—were examining me with some interest."

"Oh yes," said the other, with an evil-minded affectation of carelessness, "they asked who you were."

"Well, but, my dear fellow, you told them of course, eh?"

"Certainly, I told them," replied his friend, taking up a paper.

"Well," exclaimed —, unable to restrain a pardonable curiosity, "what then—what did they say when they heard who I was?"

"Why, the taller one observed that she was delighted to have had the pleasure of seeing so famous a personage."

"Indeed!" returned the gratified poet; "anything more?"

"Yes," continued the other, "she said she was the more pleased because she had herself taken in your celebrated 'Almanac' for the last five or six years!"

It is worthy of note, that among the many "conversation men" of the day—the intellectual giants of a generation almost passed by, whom Hook was in the habit of meeting, and there was scarcely one of eminence, Sidney Smith perhaps excepted, with whom he was not at times brought into collision,—George Colman was the only individual, "the keen encounter" of whose wit he shunned; "for *his* powers," writes a friend of both, "he (Hook) had a respect bordering on fear, and with him he rarely ever ventured to enter the lists,—no other time or place could annihilate him." It was not, perhaps, without a spice of revenge that he fathered upon the veteran a *bon-mot*, and the affiliation has remained, we believe, unquestioned, which he had himself the grace to disclaim; on the death of Mrs. Wall, the actress, being announced, he observed, "Well, I suppose then by this time she is stuck all over with bills,—this is the way they serve all the *dead walls* about London." Colman has

always had the credit or discredit of the pun—it has appeared in print as his, and as his it will probably be handed down.

As has been previously observed, about this time, 1809-10, fresh scenes and more brilliant prospects opened to the view of the young “lion,” for such he had already become, although neither then nor at any subsequent period did he ever exhibit any of the ferocity, overbearing carriage, or voracious appetite for applause that commonly distinguish the tribe. He was ever as ready to listen, as willing to speak, his fun was exuberant and spontaneous, and, a sure test of the absence of artifice, he thoroughly revelled in it himself.

Those who have attentively regarded the exhibition of a second-rate wit, cannot fail to have remarked the solicitude with which he watches for an opening, the laboured ingenuity with which he leads the conversation round to a desired point, and the care with which he husbands his good things, biding his time and dealing them out frugally, so that none be wasted. In Hook the reverse of all this was conspicuous; “there was no question detached to lead you into the ambushade of the ready-made joke.” Nor was his personal appearance less prepossessing than were his manners engaging, he is described as being, at the age of twenty, “a slim youth of fine figure, his head covered with black clustering curls;” and though years as they rolled over his head, “rubbing,” as he said, “nearly all the hair off it,” added to a sedentary life, and a too free indulgence in the pleasures of the table, had robbed him somewhat prematurely of all

pretensions to "the mould of form," the eloquent eye, the rich and mellow voice, joyous smile, and expressive play of feature, remained to the last. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that the *accolade* was graciously bestowed, and the agreeable candidate received, after very slight probation, into the order of fashion.

Elected a member of the "Eccentrics" on the same memorable night with Sheridan, Lord Peter-sham, and many others, he was soon admitted into a much nearer intimacy with these distinguished characters, and eventually, through the agency of the Marchioness of Hertford, who, like all that heard him, was struck with admiration at his peculiar powers, was presented to the Prince Regent. Introduced to a society, hitherto entirely strange, and beset by forms not altogether in accordance with his previous habits, his tact, nevertheless, and discrimination, soon made good a footing; and for the space of two or three years—probably the most idle of his life—during which he was, on more occasions than one, called upon to minister to the amusement of royalty, he enjoyed all the sweets of a gratified vanity, pride, ambition, or by whatever name that pleasurable feeling is to be designated, which men of humbler origin naturally experience in being pressed into the companionship of the *élite* of the land. The effect produced by a first appearance in fashionable life on a member of the "middle classes" is thus sketched in one of his novels—probably "*mutato nomine, de se fabula narratur*."

"The duchess undertook to point out to her new friend

any remarkable persons, and as the lady from the country became a little more reconciled to the heat and the crowd, and saw near her the hero whose name and fame have reached the farthest limits of the nether world,—ministers whose public conduct she had heard so uncereemoniously canvassed, and whose political lives were open to the remarks, the censure, or the praise of millions—at her elbow, good natured, pleasant, laughing men of the world, anxious even for an introduction to herself; when she beheld persons branded by their political opponents with every opprobrious epithet, and held up as examples of vice, profligacy, and folly, mingling in the common affairs of life, the most affectionate and tender of husbands, the kindest and most liberal of fathers,—when she saw beauty she had read of, and felt herself courted and caressed by persons whose powers of attraction had formed the theme of her mother's conversation, herself domesticated with those who, by their rank and station, were the most celebrated in the nation,—a doubt floated in her mind as to the reality of the scene she enjoyed, &c."

Hook, however, was the last man to be seriously affected by this sudden cooptation; no one was more capable of nicely estimating the degree of respect due to rank and birth; no one less likely to be dazzled by the glitter of a coronet, or, on the other hand, less liable to fall into the contemptible vulgarity of sneering at the claims of an aristocracy—to say the least, as well educated, as well mannered, and, for once to coin a word, as well moralised an assemblage of families as could be drawn from the gentry of any country in Europe.

In your thorough-going, loud-mouthed, cringing,

crawling, Radical—your roaring “vindicator of the people’s rights,” till the shadow of a lord passes athwart his view, then the most vermicular of creeping things—he took, indeed, the greatest delight; the creature was turtle and venison to him, a dish not to be disposed of hastily, and merely a vague remembrance carried away of its flavour, but one eminently worthy of the concentrated regard of the epicure, a morsel to be daintily and delicately eaten. What a luxurious meal does he make of the immaculate *Mr. Tickle* and his faithful chronicle of the vices of the nobility, “The Fashionable Magazine; or, High Life exposed,” in “Passion and Principle!” The whole sketch of the domestic manners of the Hackney patriot—especially the introduction of Lord Feversham to the family of his calumniators, is perfect. The good nature and good breeding of the young nobleman, the sneers and gossip of the ladies of the establishment—faint echoes of the parental thunder—freely indulged in till the rank of their unknown visitor is ascertained; and the vulgar and awkward acknowledgments that succeed the discovery, are hit off in the happiest style. Nor is the mischief effected through the medium of the “*Jenkinses*” of literature—discarded lacqueys, and the associates of gentlemen’s gentlemen, who provide “fashionable intelligence” for the million, at all overstated, however lightly esteemed it may be by the objects of their attacks:—

“It was not worth while,” says our author, “just at that moment to undeceive the viscount, as to the effect produced by falsehoods and calumnies regularly and incessantly per-

sisted in in print, it was sufficient for Welsted to arm himself with an unanswerable answer, if ever he was again attacked upon the subject by the Tickles. Had he known human nature generally, or the class of howling liberty-boys in particular, he would not have taken this trouble. It was now probably needless. The stubborn, high-spirited, independent Briton (such as Tickle professed himself), who rails and blusters at his betters, and thinks it the birth-right of an Englishman to be discontented, and to proclaim his discontent at every possible opportunity, is, when the test is applied, the most fawning sycophant upon the face of the globe; nay, wherever that portion of the political world which is addicted to radicalism and foul linen, can flatter, or wheedle, or terrify, or induce, by any other means, an aristocrat to join their ranks, their joy is boundless and unmixed; and the lordling, who would have been stigmatised as an ass or a tyrant had he maintained his proper station in society, the moment he joins the motley herd below him, is hailed as combining in his precious person first-rate natural talents with every accomplishment necessary to give full force to his virtuous exertions."—*Sayings and Doings, Second Series*, vol. iii. p. 242.

Strong full-bodied language this, such as smacks of Toryism in its high and palmy days, and in which Hook, richer or poorer, remained consistent to the last. But if he was free from the railing envy of the radical, so, as we have said, was he equally uninfected by vice of an opposite character. There was not, in truth, a taint of meanness, or servility in his whole composition. So far from being a "tuft-hunter," he was the tuft-hunted!—sought, solicited, dragged from his home, to form the chief and choicest attraction at lordly banquets, and though exception has been taken

at the readiness with which he permitted himself to be allured from his literary labours, still, who has the right to blame? Assuredly not those who offered the temptation, or benefited by the lapse; and it must be remembered there were those near and dear to him, whose interests, without doubt, he believed were to be more effectually served in the *salons* of London, than in the retirement of his retreat at Fulham.

Active and indefatigable as he was, and secure by the moderate exercise of his talents of a handsome income, he could not bring himself to rely upon his own industry; the pace was too slow; his sanguine temperament suggested a more exciting and eccentric course, and he preferred resting his hopes of fortune rather upon the results of some grand *coup*, than on the accumulating proceeds of regular exertion. A "man of many friends," he lived in the perpetual expectation of something "turning up," and—private considerations apart—something was surely due to a political adherent so staunch and powerful as the conductor of "Bull." Indeed, had not his life been brought prematurely to a close, it is more than probable that his claims, which it is gratifying to know were, albeit somewhat tardily, admitted, would have been satisfied with something more substantial than the smiles of Royal Dukes, or a pressing invitation to the premier's. As it is, who shall think of Theodore Hook and his Conservative patrons, without acquiring a keener relish than ever for the exquisite apologue of "Don Torribio," and the "Dean of Badajos!"

These remarks, however, obviously apply to a later period than that before us; in 1810, the case was

very different; young, prepossessing, and unincumbered,

“The world was all before him where to choose,”

and prudence, as well as inclination, would naturally move him to push his way in that particularly exclusive portion of it, to which admittance had been gained, and where his first success was as remarkable as his subsequent career proved fruitful in distress and disappointment.

Among the various characters, notable and noted, with whom Theodore Hook was now associated, was one, not more than his equal in point of birth, but raised, like himself, by social qualifications, principally by his exquisite taste in music, to a companionship with lords and dukes and noble princes; we allude to the Rev. Edward Cannon, one of the chaplains of the Prince Regent. With this gentleman, then in high favour at Carlton House, Hook contracted a close intimacy, and, though his friend's star did not continue long in the ascendant, that intimacy was interrupted only by death. Of course, Hook took all sorts of liberties with him, among the rest, that of daguerreotyping him under the name of *Godfrey Moss*, in his novel of “Maxwell.” However, as in the case of Tom Hill, the author read the scenes to Cannon, in which he figured, previously to publication, though it must be confessed that the brother of the rector of *Fudley cum Pipes* (the character is split into *Godfrey*, and his brother the clergyman, as that of Theodore himself may be said to be represented by *Daly* and *Gilbert Gurney*) presents far from a flattering resemblance.

Hook, in truth, did not do his friend justice; and we

lament it the more, inasmuch as, admirable as the delineation is, the introduction of a few more traits of genuine worth, which the original would have amply warranted, would in our opinion have materially heightened the interest of the portrait. As it is, in spite of our wishes to love the man, one's heart perforce contracts its affection, chilled by his unredeemed selfishness. Little, however, cared Cannon for the *suppressio veri*, for it amounts to no more, nothing that is set down being in the slightest degree exaggerated; and as little would he have cared had he found himself held up as a Monster or a Merry-Andrew. He contented himself with a pinch or two of snuff, and the remark, "The *cretur* has drawn one half of the picture well enough, but he has somehow quite forgotten the other!"

As has been observed, it was his musical skill that proved the means of introducing him to the notice of the Prince of Wales; but the peculiar bent of his humour, which admitted no respect of persons, proved a bar to his advancement, and lost him the countenance of that illustrious personage; the favourite, Mrs. Fitzherbert, he had offended before, and that fact, possibly, may have contributed not a little to his final dismissal. On being requested to give his opinion of an upright piano-forte, an instrument then but recently invented, he ran his hand, light as a lady's, over the keys and threw himself back with a dissatisfied air.

"What do you think of it, Mr. Cannon?" asked Mrs. Fitzherbert.

"Why, madam, it may do to lock up your bread and cheese in, and that's all it's fit for," was the reply.

It needed a voice sweeter even than Cannon's, and few surpassed it, to render harsh truths grateful to royal ears; and a still more glaring instance of plain speaking, addressed to the Prince himself, soon after procured him his *cong  *. The example, once set, was speedily followed, and Cannon ere long found himself well nigh deserted by his noble friends. Nothing, however, could induce him to curb the licence of his tongue, or to submit himself to the conventional restraints of society. On one occasion, for example, when inveighing with caustic bitterness against the late Bishop M—, a reverend Doctor who was present begged him to desist.

“Remember, my dear sir, his Lordship has been a kind friend to me: I am under the greatest obligations to him: it was he who gave me the living of C—.”

“Well,” said Cannon, “he ought to be hanged for *that*.”

Nor, were the liberties he took confined to those of the tongue; in practical coolness, where his comforts were concerned, he was unsurpassed by Hook himself. At more houses than one, where he was received on terms of intimacy, he would call, possibly in the morning, and informing the servant of his intention of dropping in to dine, would next inquire what dishes had been ordered,—“Roast leg of mutton, eh?—ah! not a bad thing—boiled better,—much better! Tell Cookums to *boil* the leg of mutton with ‘um capers,” and accordingly on or before the stroke of five, or six as the case might be—and even the hour was occasionally altered to suit his convenience—he would roll

into the drawing-room, seat himself in an arm-chair, wheel and wriggle himself into the snugest corner by the fire-side, gather the children round him—with them he was sure to be a prime favourite—and if the *pater familias*, unconscious of the presence of his uninvited guest, happened to be a little “behind time,” he would fidget and grumble, and give the unhappy “Kittums,” or by whatever name he addressed the lady of the house, no rest till she allowed dinner to be served.

To no one since the time of the old Greek could the epithet ἡδυεπής be applied with a nicer propriety. The tones of his voice were most melodious. He was wayward and whimsical, it is true, and, when displeased, apt to be silent or sarcastic; but when satisfied with his fare, and in society he liked, his playful wit and rich fund of anecdote, rendered him one of the most fascinating companions imaginable. Young and old were subject to the spell, and sat delighted listeners, as some quaint tale or old English ballad flowed from his lips: even the hostess, hardest to be appeased, melted beneath his smile, forgot her outraged economy, and suggested, with little danger of a refusal, one more glass of the “ginnums and water,” such as he loved.

Lax perhaps in his habits, he might be esteemed, beyond what was strictly becoming one of his profession; St. James's, indeed, in the days of the Regency, could hardly be expected to furnish forth a very satisfactory model for a divine. Upon one point, however, Cannon was firm and inflexible; he would suffer in his presence no jesting with sacred things; and his volatile friend, somewhat too ready to

offend in this particular, not unfrequently elicited a rebuke:—

“Come, come, my Hookums,” the former would exclaim; “stop there—be what you think witty with any thing else, but *that is my book*—you must not touch *that*.”

It is but fair to say, that the hint was invariably taken in good part, and proved commonly sufficient for the evening.

Active and energetic as was the mind of Theodore Hook, facile in receiving impressions, apt in the combination of ideas, it was no less remarkable for its retentive powers. Numerous efforts of his memory have been recorded, such as his undertaking to repeat in proper order all the names of the shopkeepers on one side of Oxford Street, and of which he omitted but one—and again, when he quite succeeded, his running over, after a single perusal, the whole list of advertisements in a number of the “Times” newspaper—extraordinary feats, although in neither case did the line extend to such an Alexandrine length as at present. One occasion, we remember, when, with the assistance of Cannon, this faculty was brought into play with rather more amusing effect. Moss and his biographer were engaged to meet, at the table of a common friend, a certain reviewer, well-known in the literary world for his varied information and for the somewhat dictatorial manner in which he was in the habit of dispensing it.—As with the great Cambridge Professor, on all matters, from the inductive sciences to Chinese chess, his *ipse dixit* was to be considered

final.* Rochefoucault observes that there is something in the misfortunes of our best friends that does not displease us ; he might have said, and with more truth, there is something in the ignorance of our best friends that does not displease us ; at all events, a gentleman who always talks, as Sidney Smith said of Macaulay, like a book in breeches, is apt to become disagreeable among less learned individuals ; and to silence the great man in question, or at least to lower his tone to the level of meaner capacities was the object of the two confederates.

Hook selected a subject which, though not perhaps particularly abstruse to astronomers, he thought was a little out of his friend's line, the Precession of the Equinoxes ; and referring to the "Encyclopædia Britannica," learnt the entire article, a very long one, by heart, without however stopping to comprehend a single sentence. Soup had scarcely been removed when Cannon, as had been previously arranged, led the conversation round to the desired point—and, availing himself of a sudden pause, drew the eyes of the whole party upon Mr. —, whom he had already, with no little tact, contrived to entangle in the topic. The gentleman as had been anticipated happened not

* There is a story current at Cambridge of an attempt, on the part of some junior fellows, to catch the great man tripping ; "Chinese Chess," it is said, was selected as the conversational stumbling-block to be laid in his way ; but, on allusion being made to it in the "Combination Room," off started the Professor at score, occupying, to the confusion of the jokers, the best part of an hour in most learned and voluble discourse, historical and scientific, upon this somewhat recondite, but, doubtless, very interesting subject.

to be "up" in that particular branch of science; to plead ignorance was not to be thought of, and, after a vague and not very intelligible answer, he made an attempt to escape from the dilemma by adroitly starting another question. His tormentors, however, were men cunning of fence and not to be easily baffled: Hook returned to the charge.

"My dear sir, you don't seem to have explained the thing to 'the Dean,' with what commentators would call, your 'usual *acumen*;' every body of course is aware that, 'The most obvious of all the celestial motions is the diurnal revolution of the starry heavens, &c.'" Here followed a couple of columns from the aforesaid disquisition in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*:

"But," continued he, "you can doubtless put the thing in a much clearer light; I confess the 'Mutation of the axis, which changes also the longitudes and right ascension of the stars and planets, by changing the equinoctial points, and thus occasioning an equation in the precession of the equinoctial point,' is a little beyond me."

For some time Mr. — parried the attack with considerable dexterity; but as the joke became obvious, others pursued it, and the victim was overwhelmed by inquiries relating to the "parallax of the earth's orbit"—"disturbing force and matter of the moon," &c. &c. till he was compelled at length to forego all claim to infallibility, and threw himself on the mercy of the foe.

It must be admitted of Cannon, that he did not always stop to consider the justice of his attacks; when in an irritable mood, at the slightest provoca-

tion, or even in the absence of provocation, he would turn upon some unoffending individual, and direct a constant fire of sarcasm upon him during the whole evening. At a dinner, for example, given by Sir —, a gentleman attached to the court—a message came down from the palace, and the host was compelled, in consequence, to quit his friends for an hour or two while he remained in attendance upon the king. On his return to the table, Cannon, pointing to one of the orders with which he was decorated, asked him what he called "*that thing*?"

"Why, you know as well as I do," was the reply, "it is my Guelphic collar."

"Oh," said Cannon (taking an enormous pinch of snuff), "it's your *collar*, is it? Ah! you think yourself a very grand cretur, I dare say. Pray, did you ever read the fable of um two dogs?"

"If I have, it has escaped my memory just now," returned the host.

"So I should think—well, it is something of this sort: there was once a poor little thin cur, half-starved and a *leetle* mangy or so; and he met, as he was trotting across the fields, an old friend of his, a stout, plethoric-looking dog, with a glossy coat, and him tail curled over him back, like a gentleman.

"Ah! Mr. Tray," says the poor little pup, "is that you? Why, how sleek you look! as for me it is much as I can do to keep skin and bone together."

"Poor little devil!" says Tray, "come along with me to my master's, and you'll soon look as plump as I do." So the two dogs trotted off together.

"Well, but, Mr. Tray," says his friend, after a

while, "what is the matter with your neck?—all the hair is rubbed off."

"Oh! that's nothing," says Tray, "it is only my collar."

"Your *what!*" says the little thin dog, "your collar, what's that?"

"Why, it is the collar my master puts on when he chains me up."

"Oh, then, your master chains you up sometimes, does he?"

"Of course," says Tray.

"Oh! then you can't run about and join your friends, and do um dandy whenever you like?"

"Why, not exactly," says Tray, "that is"—

"Ah!" says the other, "I wish you a wery good artemnoon—I'd rather have my bone and liberty;" and the little dog strutted off prouder than he had ever felt in his life, leaving his fat friend to go home to kennel.

The "moral" was obvious enough; and, notwithstanding the good humour and good breeding with which the application was received, so palpable a hit produced a disagreeable feeling in the party which Cannon took care to keep alive by perpetual recurrence to the collar mark.

Even Hook came in at times for his share of *Godfrey's* severity; the former having expressed a conviction that dreams were not the mere objectless workings of the brain they are commonly considered, but that signs and meanings were often conveyed to man by their medium.

"See what it is to be a wit," replied Cannon, with

an application to the never-failing box,* “you will believe, my Hookums, anything you ought not, and nothing that you ought!”

The following note, addressed by Cannon to one of his intimate friends, may serve to shew how little his peculiarities of expression are exaggerated in the sketch in “Maxwell:”—

“MY DEAR DICKKUMS,

“Dr. Moss is all for Dulwich,† the circumstances thereof suit me very well; salary paid quarterly and nothing to do. I had thought the election was pulling papers out of a hat, and the successful boy drew out one, on which ‘Donum Dei’ was written; if it depends on people, get their names, and I dare say we can get at them. I suppose six and eightpence is at the bottom of the thing, as of everything else in this world; meanwhile, your zeal for me becomes you, although I do not see so strongly as you do, the necessity of my shewing my old face to the creturs. I can’t run after them all over the town, but

* Cannon’s receptacle for snuff was generally either the dirty piece of paper which originally enveloped his purchase or some trumpery tin thing adorned with the representation of the “Jolly Sailor,” &c. A friend having remonstrated, half in earnest and half in jest, at the production of such a piece of vulgarity at his table, was answered, “It suits my purpose very well, and I can’t afford a better.” Shortly afterwards, the Dean—so Cannon was called—was presented, by his entertainer, with a handsome box, mounted with a cannon in gold upon the lid, and beneath, the motto—“*Non sine pulvere.*”

† Mr. Cannon, at this time, thought of standing for a vacant fellowship at Dulwich College. The idea, we believe, was afterwards abandoned.

I have written ('ah! *written*,' you'll say—stop a bit) to Linley, to ask him about it all. If introduction is necessary, he shall be the introducer. The Pope was too cool about it in his converse on Sunday. Whatever Linley thinks is right to be done, I'll awake and rise and do it. That I think will satisfy you. Did you send 'Intelligence?' it came to night. I see your claw in it. Poetryums and Puffum Devilums. Do send me 'Valpergis,' by Twopenny, I will repay thee. Your's, always, DEANUMS."

"March, 1831."

In the habit of composing, almost extemporaneously, beautiful airs and variations, to which he either supplied words himself or adapted those of some relique of ancient minstrelsy, Cannon could rarely be induced to put poetry or accompaniment to paper. Those who ever heard him are not likely to forget the exquisite taste with which he used to sing the rare old ballad of "Bold Robin Hood, and the Bishop of Hereford," a performance quite unequalled in its way. The melody has happily been preserved in the popular song of "The Old Maid,"* which Hook struck off, having frequently, but fruitlessly, begged Cannon to give to the public some version of his own. But the latter, though busy enough with his brain, exhibited, possibly with fear of the fate of his brother of Chatham before his eyes, a marvellous aversion from the pen and inkhorn. Of some half-dozen slipshod

* It was nearly all improvised one evening by Hook: each character is a portrait.

effusions of his muse, which it must be confessed was rather of the "worst-natured," we subjoin a specimen, not that it is the best, but as being one no longer liable to give offence :—

THE DEAN.

Once on a time there was a Dean
Lord L— made by mistake,
For if he had known him as well as I,
There never had been such a make.

This Dean was a man about four feet high,
With a skin like the skin of a toad,
On his waistcoat before a collar he wore,
Beautiful, red and broad.

Behind that red, there beat a heart
As black as a Dean's need be ;
He talked of his "feelings," as many Deans do,
But that was—Hypocrisy.

Two men of worth in their different states
Did once to his choir belong,
The first of these I call Tom for short,
Jonathan t'other, for long.

Poor Jonathan went his weary way
To see his mother when dying ;
Think you when Jonathan mourning came back
He found the Dean a-crying ?

" Oh, no !" to Jonathan thus he said,
" Your mother is under ground,
But you've been away for many a day
I shall fine you forty pound."

Poor Tom is dead—around his grave
 His weeping comrades stay,
 But as to the Dean, he was not to be seen,
 His “feelings” kept him away!

’Twas so he said—but had poor Tom
 Been a lord, or anything higher,
 The Dean had been there, with mock visage of care,
 And his tears would have filled the choir.

Beggars on horseback ride but one way,
 And this is our hope and desire,
 When Tom is happy with his music above
 May the Dean sit down stairs by the fire!

Or, by way of a piece of unparalleled nonsense,
 take the following—

IMPROMPTU.

If down his throat a man should choose
 In fun, to jump or slide,
 He ’d scrape his shoes against his teeth,
 Nor dirt his own inside.

Or if his teeth were lost and gone,
 And not a stump to scrape upon,
 He ’d see at once how very pat
 His tongue lay there, by way of mat,
 And he would wipe his feet on *that*!

Cannon, notwithstanding the personalities in which
 he too freely indulged, was a kindly-hearted man,
 and would have gone, grumbling of course all the
 way, a hundred miles to serve a friend; instances,
 indeed, of a generosity almost romantic, and directly
 at variance with his acknowledged selfishness in

trifles, have been recorded of him. "Les vertus se perdent dans l'intérêt, comme les fleurs se perdent dans la mer," says some one, Cannon, at least, had the merit of affording an exception to the rule, by resolutely declining a considerable fortune freely offered, in favour of one who, though comparatively a stranger to him, he judged to have a prior claim upon the donor; that too at a time when he was himself suffering not a little from straitened circumstances. Some slight trait of so redeeming a nature should have been preserved in drawing the character of *Godfrey Moss*.

CHAPTER V.

LOVE MATTERS.—ADVENTURES AT SUNBURY.—THE RIVALS.—“THE FLOWER POT.”—VISITS TO TAUNTON.—MR. HOOK’S ENGAGEMENT WITH MISS ——. —“LINES FROM THE HEART.”—EPIGRAM.—THE MATCH BROKEN OFF.

IN *affaires de cœur*, properly so called, Theodore Hook was doomed to be unfortunate; spite of the fascinating charms of his conversation, which softened the savage hearts of bailiffs and made men of war forgetful of the stern duties of discipline, and what perhaps some of our readers may deem more inexplicable still, spite of his handsome figure and manly bearing, his mirthful smile, and his eye beaming with intellect and imagination and, (can we doubt it?), skilled in all the “prone and speechless dialect” of love, he failed in early life to win to his arms some fair partner, whose gentle influence might have controlled that prodigal nature, and have set his unmatched talents upon the compassing of high and honourable ends. It was not to be so—his wooing never prospered—as with his first hero, luck was ever against him; and who shall tell how much of that carelessness of living, that ceaseless craving after excitement, that marked his career had origin in crushed hopes and a wrung heart!

Of the three courses which present themselves to the

choice of an unhappy lover—the suicidal or misanthropic, the rational, and the outrageous—his hot and rebellious temperament, always at fever heat, prompted the adoption of the last. He wanted fixedness of purpose to struggle successfully with disappointed passion, and as to listening to reason, as it is called, you might as well, to use his own expression, “wash Mount Ætna with Gowland’s Lotion, in the hopes of preventing an eruption, as expect to extinguish the steady flame smouldering in such a bosom.” Still less, on the other hand, was he a man likely to abjure cravats, make parade of his misery, and, as was said of his old school-fellow Byron, to weep with the public and wipe his eyes with the press. Scarce a trace of this morbid feeling is discernible in his works; here and there an isolated passage might be found, which to those in secret, would tell of bitter remembrances and sorrow unsubdued; thus in “Sayings and Doings:”—

“I once knew a lovely girl, all kindness, all gentleness, all goodness; from her I parted in the midst of gaiety, and in a crowd of idlers who were participating in it. We shook hands, and I left her—I never saw her again. Had I known that I then beheld her for the *last time*, my heart would have burst.”

The first of his amatory adventures which we have been able to trace—it was too transient and too extravagant to warrant a graver name—had an issue not only unsuccessful, but ludicrous enough to have supplied an admirable “hit” for one of his own farces. In the course of his numerous suburban excursions, or possibly during his brief sojourn with

Doctor Curtis at Sunbury, he had become acquainted with a young lady, a resident in the neighbourhood, possessed of an amiable disposition and great personal attractions. Theodore was a favourite both with her family and herself, but her affections, unfortunately, were fixed upon another. Notwithstanding, however, the evident preference shewn to his rival, the young gentleman prosecuted his suit with all the ardour and blindness of eighteen. It was to no purpose that good-humoured hints were thrown out on the part of his enamorata, that highly agreeable as his society could not fail to be, another held that place in her regards for which he was in vain contending. He determined to set all upon a single cast, and to throw himself, and whatever loose silver might be remaining from the proceeds of his last operetta, at the fair one's feet.

On the day fixed for the final appeal, he found the ground already in the occupation of the enemy; and it was not till towards the close of the evening that an opportunity was to be snatched of making a formal proposal for the lady's hand: as might have been expected, it was declined, firmly but kindly; and off rushed the rejected swain, in a frenzy of rage, to his hotel, whither—for the little village in those days boasted but of one—he was soon followed by the successful candidate, Mr. P——.

It so happened that, in addition to the *contretemps* of being lodged beneath the same roof, the rivals actually occupied adjoining chambers, and were separated from each other merely by a thin boarded partition: everything that passed in one apartment was conse-

quently pretty distinctly audible in the next; and the first sounds that greeted Mr. P—— on his arrival were certain strong objurgations and maledictions, in which his own name was constantly recurring, and which proceeded from the neighbouring room. Every now and then a boot-jack or a clothes-brush was hurled against the wall; next a noise would be heard as of a portmanteau being kicked across the floor, accompanied by such epithets as might be supposed most galling and appropriate to a discomfited foe. Then a pause—a burst of lamentation or an attempt at irony—then again more invectives, more railing, more boot-jacks, and so on for half the night did the hapless lover continue to bewail the bad taste of women in general, and the especial want of discernment in his own mistress; and to heap bitter abuse and inflict grievous imaginary chastisement upon the person of his more favoured opponent.

Mr. P. was a Welchman, and for a moment the hot blood of the Tudors and Llewellyns bubbled up; but “cool reflection at length came across” the irresistible absurdity of the position, and struck with full force upon a mind rendered more than usually complacent by the agreeable assurances so lately received, and he threw himself on the bed in a fit of perfectly Homeric laughter. Early on the next morning Hook started for town; but whether he ever learnt the perilous vicinity in which he had passed the few preceding hours, we know not. The anecdote reached us from a different quarter.

During this period he was not so thoroughly engrossed by the anxieties of love, but that he found

time and sufficient spirits for the indulgence of those lively pleasantries, which must doubtless have contributed much to recommend him to the favour of the lady's guardian, if not to her own. The name of the inn, "The Flower-Pot," which was the scene of the absurd adventure just related, suggested one of these. There resided, it seems, at Sunbury, in a large house, an elderly gentleman, a bachelor, of somewhat eccentric disposition, whose ruling passion was for his garden. This, albeit prodigality was by no means a besetting sin of the proprietor, was kept in the most admirable order, and decorated, regardless of expense, with a profusion of ornaments in the very height of suburban fashion—leaden cupids, slate sun-dials, grottoes of oyster-shells and looking-glass, heaps of flint and overburned bricks, denominated rock-work; and beyond all, and above all, with a magnificent vase filled with a flaming cluster of fuschias, geraniums, and a number of plants with brilliant blossoms and unutterable names, which faced the entrance. Here, one fine afternoon, when the flowers had reached their *acmé* of refulgence, Mr. Theodore Hook pulled up his dennet. A powerful tug at the bell brought a sort of half-gardener, half-groom to the gate in double-quick time.

"Take the mare round to the stable, put her in a loose box, and rub her down well. I'll come and see her fed myself in a few minutes: none of you rascals are to be trusted!"

So saying, the young gentleman threw the reins to the domestic, marched leisurely along the broad, brown-sugar looking walk, dexterously cutting off here and

there an overgrown carnation with the lash of his driving whip, and entered the hall. Giving another tremendous jerk to the bell-wire in passing, he walked into the dining-room, the door of which happened to be open, took up a magazine, and threw himself at full length upon the sofa. A tidily-dressed maid-servant appeared at the summons.

"Bring me a glass of brandy-and-water, my dear, and send "Boots."

"'Boots,' and 'brandy-and-water,'—La, sir!" exclaimed the astonished girl.

"You may fetch me a pair of slippers yourself, if you like; so make haste, and you shall have a kiss when you come back."

Duped by the authoritative air assumed by the visitor, it would be indecorous to suppose another motive, the attendant disappeared, and speedily returning with the slippers, observed,

"If you please, sir, I have brought you a pair, but they are master's, and he is rather particular."

"Particular! Nonsense! where's the brandy-and-water?"

"He never leaves out the spirits, sir; he always keeps the key himself, sir, in his own pocket."

"He must be a deuced odd sort of fellow, then: send him here immediately."

"Master is dressing, sir; he will be down directly," was the reply; and, accordingly, after the lapse of a few minutes, Mr. — made his appearance, in full evening costume.

"My good friend," commenced Hook, without raising his eyes from the paper, "allow me to observe,

that the rules of your establishment are a little inconvenient to travellers: I have been here above a quarter of an hour, and have not been able to get so much as a glass of brandy-and-water—bring one immediately—hot: and let me know what you have got for dinner.”

“I really beg your pardon,” said old Mr. —, as soon as he could find words; “I really beg your pardon, but I am quite at a loss—”

“So am I, my good man—for a glass of brandy-and-water—bring that, and another for yourself, and then I shall be happy to hear whatever you have to say.”

“But, sir, you must permit me to state—”

“I was never in such a detestable house in my life,” exclaimed Hook, starting up; “what do you stand chattering there for, instead of attending to my order: am I to be kept here starving all night? Bring the brandy-and-water, d’ye hear.”

The old gentleman was struck positively speechless; his face purpled, he seemed in eminent peril of choking with the sudden conflux of ire, indignation, and astonishment.

“Why, the fellow’s drunk!” pursued Theodore; “disgracefully drunk, at this time of day! and in his own parlour, too! I shall feel it my duty, sir, to lay a statement of this inexcusable conduct before the bench.”

Mr. — sprang to the bell. “John—Thomas—turn this impudent scoundrel out of the house!”

The arrival of the servants necessarily led to an explanation. Nothing could exceed Mr. Hook’s regret; what could be done? what apology could be made? He was a perfect stranger to Sunbury; had been di-

rected to the "Flower-Pot," as the inn affording the best accommodation; and, on seeing what he imagined to be a gigantic representation of the sign in question at the garden gate, he had naturally entered, and acted upon that erroneous impression. This was the unkindest cut of all. To find a stranger reclining in full possession of his sofa and slippers, was bad enough; to be treated as a dilatory innkeeper, was worse; and to be taxed with insolence and intoxication, was still more trying to a gentleman of respectable character and excitable nerves; but to hear the highest achievement of art he possessed—the admiration of himself and friends, and the envy of all Sunbury, his darling vase, compared with which the "Warwick" and the "Barberini" were as common wash-pots—to hear this likened to an alehouse sign, was a humiliation which dwarfed into insignificance all preceding insults. But as to whether Hook contrived to soothe the anger he had provoked, and to win a way, as was his wont, into the good graces of his victim—or whether this last affront proved irremediable and he was compelled to seek further entertainment for himself and horse at the "Flower-Pot" minor, unfortunately our informant is at fault.

With respect to his love affair, any painful impression which the circumstances we have related may have left upon his mind was destined to be speedily obliterated by an attachment of a far more serious nature,—one in which his deepest feelings were engaged, and one which was not unreturned by the object of his affections,—one, too, which, had friends and fortune smiled, might happily have worked with the

best results upon his warm and generous nature, reclaiming him from habits now fixing an unresisted hold upon him, generating motives not only for industry but for providence, and proving the means of preserving him from years of suffering, sorrow, and remorse.

Nearly a couple of years had elapsed, allowing ample time for the first wound which we take to have been but skin-deep to have healed, when he was induced to visit Taunton in Somersetshire about 1810. Here at the house of Mr. Woodforde, with whose sons he had contracted an intimacy in London, he was received with all the warmth of hospitality for which that gentleman was noted. The family happened to be large, the house cheerful, and the master never better pleased than when he saw his table filled, and especially by men of vivacity and genius. The *avatar* of such an incarnation of the spirit of fun as the youthful Theodore was naturally hailed with delight in so congenial a circle. His wit and pleasantry, supported by the extreme amiability of his disposition, rendered him, as they never failed to do, a general favourite. His visit was extended,—repeated and repeated again. The time wore merrily on, and “softened remembrances” of those days, each worthy of its white stone, yet “steal o’er the heart” of such of the denizens of Taunton, whose memory reaches back to Theodore Hook’s sojourn among them. To him it was probably the happiest point of the happiest period of his life, and being so, was naturally fruitful in those bursts of eccentricity which distinguished the earlier portion of his career; many and mirthful are the legends rife in that neighbourhood, far and wide, of his adventures; the farmers

of — yet recount how when the tythe-dinner was waxing dull and the churchwarden prosy, he threw unlooked for life into the party, on summoning them to witness the regatta he had contrived by launching their broad-brimmed beavers upon the sea. Nor is the celebrated banquet (that should have been) at Taunton itself, forgotten,—the surprise and anger of the host on the arrival at his house of some dozen unexpected guests, Theodore among the number—his sudden dart at the author of the hoax, the sparkle of whose eye for once betrayed him.—Hook's fall and pretended death, the anguish and alarm of the supposed homicide, and his proportionate delight at seeing his tormentor spring from the floor on the approach of the surgeon, and disappear, harlequin-like, through the open window. Chapters might be filled with similar anecdotes; and if we have appeared somewhat too free in our selection, it must be borne in mind that the buoyancy of spirit resulting in those daring feats of humour is one of the prime characteristics of the man, part and parcel of his very nature.

But he was not destined to escape himself unscathed. Of all perilous places there is none so fraught with danger to the peace of a bachelor as a pleasant country house. Hook never ceased to inculcate a truth so painfully attested by his own experience. Among the many agreeable visitors he was in the habit of meeting at the Woodforde's were General F—and his family, residents in the neighbourhood. The General's wife had several very beautiful and fascinating daughters by a former husband, a Captain in the navy, and it was to the youngest of these, Merelina,

who to extreme youth added the graces and accomplishments of her sisters, that Theodore yielded up his heart. Morning, noon, and evening were they thrown constantly together. The young lady was passionately fond of music ; Theodore, we know, played and sung beautifully, composing both words and accompaniment as his fingers passed over the instrument. She listened with "a greedy ear" to the charm of the improvisatore, till wonder rose to admiration and admiration kindled into love. How could it be otherwise ?

We have been favoured with a few stanzas, written by Hook at this time, wherein the state of his affections is developed with sufficient plainness. Whatever degree of inspiration they may exhibit, they at least read in curious contrast with the more usual effusions of his muse.

LINES FROM THE HEART.

Sweet is the vale where virtue dwells,
The vale where honest love invites,
By margin'd brook or moss-grown cells,
To taste its joys, its soft delights.
Sweet is the vale where oft I've strayed
Through tangled brake or meadow green ;
Sweet are its groves and sweet its shade,
The verdant vale of Taunton Dean.

If friends the way-worn stranger seeks,
Whose kindness, comfort can impart ;
Here every tongue a welcome speaks,
A home he finds in every heart.

Nay, when I hear the Cynic cry,
No friendship in the world is seen,
My fleeting thoughts to Taunton fly,
For friendship dwells in Taunton Dean.

The bandage once from Cupid's eyes,
By reason and by prudence drawn,
The wanton god to Taunton flies
To revel on its daisied lawn.
For oh ! 'tis sure where Beauty plays
Love in its ecstasy is seen ;
His sight restored he onward strays,
She holds her court in Taunton Dean.

And if amid the brilliant throng,
One angel girl appears most fair,
After his flight, would Love be wrong
To claim her heart and settle there ?
My Rosa's eye,—her peach-bloom cheek,
Her smile divine, her look serene,
Command the God—he dares not speak,
But owns her sway in Taunton Dean.

Grant me a cot wherein to live
With such a girl, with friends so rare,
No greater boon need fortune give,
Save what my wants might warrant there.
'Tis all I hope,—'tis all I seek,
For there all bliss, all joy is seen ;
In one short prayer, my wishes speak,
To live, to die, in Taunton Dean.

There does not appear to have been any attempt to conceal the progress of this attachment ; at all events, it did not escape the observation of a certain elderly

lady, who was also an inmate of Mr. Woodforde's mansion, and who, to judge from the tone of the following lines, written by way of answer to the above, seems to have wished the wooing well. We give them for the sake of the characteristic rejoinder, which the omission of a couple of letters in the transcribing provoked from Hook.

In gentle Merelina's *prase*
 Young Edward sung in softest strains;
 But such kind thoughts had oft been breathed
 To other *Nympts*, by other swains.

This, that which proves her charms supreme,
 And in our minds exalts her more;
 She won the peerless Edward's heart,
 Which no maid e'er could win before.

On reading the above, and finding the words *praise* and *Nymph* misspelt.

In your lines there's a satire concealed, I discover,
 For in singing the praise of your T. E. H. lover,
 By the way you have spelt it, a slight is committed,
 For in praising the youth, I find *I* quite omitted;
 Your *Nymph* too is only a few degrees better,
 Though *H* is at best but an optional letter;
 But really this nymph can ne'er shine as my bride,
 If she goes through the world without *H* at her side.

T. E. Hook.

But the lays neither of the "peerless Edward" himself, nor of his poetic patroness, availed to avert the *fulmen* that was impending. The proposed departure of the General and his family for Hampshire, rendered necessary an avowal of attachment on the

part of Theodore; but though the young lady exhibited no unwillingness to share the humble "cot at Taunton Dean," it was not precisely the sort of establishment which Mrs. F—— had contemplated for her daughter. Hook, at the time, had no fixed income, no visible means of subsistence, not even the cot to offer. Under these circumstances, a formal *veto* was placed upon the engagement into which the youthful pair had a little rashly entered. Something like an idea of resistance to the parental mandate seems to have been entertained at first; if so, it was quickly abandoned, and the young lady induced to submit her case to the arbitration of a friend of the family, a barrister, and a man of unquestionable honour and discernment. The decision of this gentleman could but prove fatal to the hopes of the lovers; the engagement was cancelled forthwith. The fair Merelina bade adieu to Taunton, and—a rather remarkable conclusion to the affair—eventually married the referee, who, then undistinguished and unknown, was destined to arrive at one of the highest dignities attainable in his profession.

This was not the last of Mr. Hook's attachments, though it was, we believe, the only instance which terminated in a positive engagement; his union with another lady, young, amiable, and in every way attractive, was, at a somewhat later period, half anticipated by his family. His brother, and his excellent sister-in-law, who ever took the warmest interest in his welfare, were most anxious to see him respectably settled, and would have given their cordial assent to the match; what interposed to disappoint their wishes,

and to launch him again rudderless upon the stream of life, we know not. Later still, after his return from the Mauritius, an opportunity is said to have offered itself to him of forming an eligible alliance with one who became subsequently the wife of a member of a noble house; but other bonds, gathering daily accession of strength and weight, were upon him, fettering his affections, and silencing his tongue; and all hope of a happy marriage was, henceforward, at an end.

CHAPTER VI.

MR. HOOK APPOINTED TREASURER TO THE MAURITIUS.—HIS DISLIKE TO DANCING.—PAPER ON THE SUBJECT.—DUEL WITH GENERAL THORNTON.—“LIONIZING” PORT LOUIS.—COLONIAL DELICACIES.—A PUBLIC DINNER.—DEPARTURE OF GOVERNOR FARQUHAR AND ITS CONSEQUENCES TO MR. HOOK.

Up to this date, 1812, Theodore Hook had been almost, if not entirely, dependent upon his pen for pecuniary supplies; his father was in no condition to assist him; and at the rate of two or three farces a year, which seems to have been about the average of his productions, an income could scarcely have been realized by any means commensurate with the expenses of a fashionable young gentleman “upon Town;” debts began to accumulate, and he had already resorted to the pernicious expedient of raising money upon his “promise to write,”—a draught upon the brain, honoured, on at least one occasion, by Mr. Harris, the manager of Covent Garden, when he was presented with an appointment which promised to place him in easy circumstances for the remainder of his life—that of Accountant-General and Treasurer at the Mauritius, worth about £2,000 per annum.

How, indeed, a trust of such importance came to be confided to a young man utterly unversed in the common routine of an office, and whose habits were far from being such as would guarantee any very extra-

ordinary application to the details of business, it is unnecessary to inquire. It is said, "*les femmes peuvent tout, parcequ'elles gouvernent les personnes qui gouvernent tous,*" and Hook was, we know, a prime favourite with "the fair of May Fair." He had certainly as yet but little legitimate claim upon the notice of Government, and we can scarcely suppose that any feeling of that particular species of gratitude, defined to be a lively sense of favours to come, could have led to so remarkable a disposal of patronage. With an evident spice of autology, he says, in describing one of the prominent characters in "Sayings and Doings," that being "full of anecdote, with an elegant mind, good taste and great readiness, he was naturally sought, courted, and admired: the consequence of which was, that his retirement in Garden-court was seldom visited out of term, and by degrees the disinclination he felt to the prosecution of his profession, grew into absolute disgust. His talent, however, was not to be subdued or overcome; it was of that commanding nature which ensures success; and never did man in the outset of life meet with a greater share of good fortune than our hero. He had secured amongst his friends men of power and interest, and at eight-and-twenty found himself possessed of an office worth a couple of thousand pounds per annum."

The main difference between the two cases being, that the true man outstripped the fictitious, in the race of promotion, by about four years. It was not, however, till October, 1813, that, after a long but agreeable voyage, he entered upon his duties at the Mauritius.

It so happened that the island, which had been captured from the French in 1811,* had been since that time under the control of Mr., afterwards Sir R. J. Farquhar, who, as Governor, united in his own person all the executive and legislative powers. Nothing could have been more favourable to the young official than this circumstance. Mr. Farquhar being not only esteemed throughout the colony, on account of his judgment, moderation, and affability, but being also connected with Dr. James Hook, by the latter's marriage with his sister. The reception which met Theodore on his arrival was as encouraging as could have been wished, and his own convivial qualities and agreeable manners soon made him as popular among the *élite* of Port Louis, as he had been in the fashionable and literary circles of London. In a letter addressed to his old friend, Mathews, about a couple of years after his establishment in what he terms, "this paradise, and not without angels," he gives a most spirited and joyous account of his general mode of life, and of the social resources of the island:—

"We have," says he, "operas in the winter, which sets in about July; and races too begin in July; we have an excellent beef-steak club, and the best Freemasons' lodge in the world. We have subscription concerts, and balls, and the parties in private houses here are seldom less than from two to three hundred. At the last ball given at the government-house, upwards of seven hundred and fifty ladies were present, which, considering that the greater proportion of the female

* It was finally ceded to Great Britain in 1814, on the restoration of Louis XVIII. to the throne of France.

population are not admissible, proves the number of inhabitants, and the extent of the society.

"I dare say some of my fat-headed friends in that little island, where the beef grows, fancy that I am making a fortune, considering that I am Treasurer! and Accountant-General! Fresh butter, my dear fellow, is ten shillings per pound; a coat costs thirty pounds English; a pair of gloves fifteen shillings; a bottle of claret, the best, ten-pence; and pine-apples a penny a piece. Thus, you see, while the articles necessary to existence are exorbitant, luxuries are dirt cheap, and a pretty life we do lead. Breakfast at eight, always up by gun-fire, five o'clock; bathe and ride before breakfast; after breakfast lounge about; at one have a regular meal, yclep't a tiffen, hot meat, vegetables, &c.; and at this we generally sit through the heat of the day, drinking our wine and munching our fruit; at five, or half-past, the carriages come to the door, and we go either in them or in palanquins to dress, which operation performed we drive out to the race-ground, and through the Champs de Mars, the Hyde Park Lane, till half-past six; come into town, and at seven dine, when we remain till ten or eleven, and then join the French parties, as there is regularly a ball somewhere or other every night: these things blended with business make out the day and evening."*

The amount of business blended with these things was, it is to be feared, disproportionately small; the grievous calamity that subsequently overtook him, the whole host of ills and sorrows that followed after and weighed him down prematurely to the grave were solely attributable to the culpable and dangerous habit of trusting business entirely to subordinates. As for the lighter occupations of which he speaks,

* Life of Mathews, vol. ii.

and which, considering the degree of intimacy with him, in which Mathews stood, and the absence of all apparent motive to play the hypocrite, may surely be taken as a fair sample of his mode of life; they seem blameless enough, and certainly afford no indications of the recklessness and profligacy ascribed to him by his enemies.

How, indeed, he managed to undergo the regular succession of balls we cannot pretend to guess; dancing in all its phases he abhorred—"the greater the fool, the better the dancer," was a maxim the truth of which he would at all times, and in all places, most stoutly maintain. Denunciations against the indecent exhibitions on the stage and the scarcely less objectionable introduction of the waltz into private life, are rife throughout his pages. But it was his fate ever to war with giants;—Reform and Railroads—Ballet and Emancipation of the Blacks, have held their sway, with what profit to the community need not be here discussed—spite of the grey goose-quill, *telum imbelle*, of the satirist. But whatever opinion may be entertained of his political vaticinations, the following remarks, quite as applicable now, or even more so than when originally penned, may possibly meet with a favourable reception from gentlemen—not being subscribers to the "Omnibus Box," on either side of the "house:"—

"Now, not being at this present writing in love with any Opera dancer, we can see with 'eyes unprejudiced' that the performances to which we allude (*ballets*) are in the highest possible degree objectionable, as referring to taste, and disgusting, as relating to decency.

“First then as to taste—nobody upon earth, we should think, can be bold enough to assert that the horizontal elevation of the female leg and the rapid twisting of the body—the subsequent attitude and expansion of the arms—are graceful—we mean merely as to dancing. No man certainly, except those whose intellects and appetites are more debased than those of men in general, can feel either amusement or gratification in such an exhibition.

“Woman is so charming, so fascinating, so winning, and so ruling by the attractions which properly belong to her—by her delicacy—her gentleness—and, her modesty—that we honestly confess, whenever we see a lovely girl doing that which degrades her, which must lower her even in her own estimation, we feel a pang of regret, and lament to find conduct applauded to the very echo which reduces the beautiful creature before us to a mere animal in a state of exhibition.

“But if there really be men who take delight in the ‘*Ionici motus*’ of the Italian Opera, surely *our own* women should be spared the sight of such indelicacies: nothing which the Roman satirist mentions as tending to destroy the delicate feelings of the female sex, could possibly be worse than those which week after week may be seen in the Haymarket.

“We have strenuously attacked, for its unnatural indecency the custom of dressing actresses in men’s attire upon the English stage, but a lady in *small* clothes is better on a public theatre than a lady with no clothes at all.

“We are quite ready to admit, without in the smallest degree lamenting, the superiority of for-

eigners over the natives of England in the art and mystery of cutting capers, and if the ladies and gentlemen annually imported jumped as high as the *volteurs* in POTIER's 'DANAIDES' at the *Porte St. Martin*—neither would our envy nor our grief be excited, but we certainly *do* eye with mistrust and jealousy the avidity with which 'foreign manners,' 'foreign customs,' and 'foreign morality,' are received into our dear and much loved country.

"While custom sanctions the nightly *commission* of waltzing in our best society, it perhaps is only matter of consolation to the matrons who permit their daughters to be operated upon in the mysteries of that dance to see, that women can be found to commit grosser indelicacies even on a public stage.

"A correspondent of the SPECTATOR, in the 67th number, Vol. 1, describes accurately under another name the *mechanical* part of the Foreign Waltz of these days, and says:—"I suppose this diversion was first invented to keep up a good understanding between young men and women, but I am sure had you been here you would have seen great matter for speculation."

"We say so *now*—but the waltz has proved a *bad* speculation to the very dowagers who allow it to be committed; for, as can be proved by reference to fashionable parish-registers, there have been fewer marriages in good society by one half, annually upon the average, since the introduction of this irritating indecency into England.

"If, therefore, the *public* dances at the King's Theatre are looked at, merely as *authorities* for the

conduct of *private* balls, the matter is still worse; but we have too high an opinion of our country-women in general to think this of them, and we are sure that we are speaking the sentiment of the most amiable and the most charming when we raise the voice of rebuke against the dress and deportment of the Italian Corps de Ballet.

“One advocate we are certain to have in the person of an old gentlewoman next to whom we sat last Saturday se’nnight, who clearly had never been at the Opera, during the whole course of her long and doubtlessly respectable life, till that very evening.

“When the ballet commenced, she appeared delighted; but when one of the principal females began to elevate her leg beyond the horizontal, she began evidently to fidget, and make a sort of see-saw motion with her head and body, in pure agitation; at every lofty jump I heard her ejaculate a little ‘Oh;’ at a somewhat lengthened *pirouette*, she exclaimed, ‘sotto voce’, ‘Ah!’ with a sigh; but at length when a tremendous whirl had divested the greater part of the performer’s figure of drapery—the band ceasing at the moment to give time to the twirl—the poor old lady screamed out—‘*Oh la!*’—which was heard all over the house, and caused a shout of laughter at the expense of a poor sober-minded Englishwoman, whose nerves had not been screwed up to a sufficiently fashionable pitch to witness what she *saw* was a perfect, but *thought* must have been an accidental exposure, of more of a woman’s person than is usually given to the gaze of the million.

“Witlings and whipsters, dandies, demireps, and

dancers, may rank us with our fat friend in the tabby silk, to whom we have just referred, if they please ; but we will always run the risk of being counted unfashionable rather than immoral.

“ So few people moving in the world take the trouble of thinking for themselves, that it is necessary to open their eyes to their own improprieties ; the natural answer to a question, ‘ How can you suffer your daughters to witness such exhibitions ? ’ is, ‘ why every body else goes, why should not they ? ’ And then, the numerous avocations of an opera-house evening divert the attention from the stage. True ; but there is a class of women differently situated, who are subject to the nuisance, merely because those who do not care about it are indifferent to its correction ; we mean the daughters and wives of respectable aldermen and drysalters, and tradesmen of a superior class, who are rattled and shaken to the opera once or twice in the season, in a hackney-coach, and come into the pit all over finery, with long straws, abstracted from ‘ their carriage,’ sticking in their flounces.

“ Who is there that does not know that the Lady Patronesses of ALMACK’S have interdicted pantaloons, tight or loose, at their assemblies ? We have seen a MS. instruction (which, alas ! never *was* printed), from this mighty conclave, announcing their *fiat* in these words, ‘ *Gentlemen will not be admitted without breeches and stockings !* ’

“ No sooner was this mandate, in whatever terms the published one was couched, fulminated from King-street, than the ‘ lean and slippered *pantaloons* ’ was

exterminated, and, as the Directresses directed, 'short hose' were the order of the day.

"If the same lovely and honourable ladies were to take the opera-house under their purifying control, and issue, in the same spirit at least, an order that 'Ladies will not be permitted to appear without——' (whatever may be the proper names for the drapery of females), we are quite convinced that they would render a great service to society, and extricate the national character from a reproach which the tacit endurance of such grossnesses has, in the minds of all moderate people, unfortunately cast upon it at present."—*John Bull*, 1823.

This contempt of dancing and dancers, which, in so young a man, is almost as remarkable as his subsequent antipathy to the stage, proved the means of involving Mr. Hook, quite at the outset of life, in a quarrel with no less a personage than the well-known General Thornton (the original, it is said, of Mathews's Major Longbow), from which he extricated himself in the usual way, with great *éclat*, and what is the fashion to term honour. He had let fall, it appears, at an assembly, some expressions derogatory to the amusement in question, to which the General, who was himself waltzing most vigorously, and accidentally overheard them, replied in terms of uncalled for personality; the latter was, in consequence, compelled by Theodore to quit the apartment, but thought fit speedily to return and resume the dance, without taking further notice of the affront. Such conduct, whatever might have been its motive, not unnaturally led to a demonstration of surprise on the part of the

other, which rendered further forbearance impossible. The General was compelled to demand a species of "satisfaction," which was very readily accorded; the parties met, Hook attended by a worthy baronet, and exchanged shots, without other effect than to elicit the fullest approbation of the courage and self-possession of the youthful combatant; so youthful in feelings as well as years, that while the *salons* of London were resounding with praises of his gallantry, he was busily engaged in mock renewals of the fight with his brother's children, beneath the walnut-trees of Hertingfordbury.

Of Mr. Hook's pursuits at the Mauritius, few particulars, save those given in the letter to Mathews, already quoted, have reached us: they were probably not far dissimilar in spirit from those in which he had indulged at home; at least an anecdote or two corroborative of the "*solum non animum mutant, &c.*," which we have heard him relate, would lead to such an inference. One of these bore reference to the reception with which a respectable family, that had been recommended to his notice by some common friend in England, was greeted on its arrival at the island. Hook was, of course, all kindness and hospitality—an invitation to La Réduite,* a country retreat belonging to

* The following description is given by Mr. Pridham, in his valuable work on the "Mauritius and its Dependencies," of a spot at which Mr. Hook passed many, and those not among the least happy, days of his life. "Reduit, the country-house of the Governor, is in the district of Woka, at the confluence of that stream, and the Rivière Profonde with Grand Rivière. It is a delightful residence, is in a highly picturesque situation, being built on an angle of land at the junction of the two deep and extensive

the Governor, and at which the Treasurer also occasionally resided, was immediately forwarded to the strangers. Equally, as a matter of course, their agreeable host took upon himself the task of "lionizing" the neighbourhood; and more especially of pointing out to their observation the beauties, architectural and otherwise, of Port Louis.

For this purpose, the morning following that of debarkation was selected. The town at that period, and it has received but few additions since, was of moderate extent, stretching something in the shape of an amphitheatre almost three miles along the coast, and bounded inland at a distance scarcely exceeding half a mile, by an open space called the "Champ de Mars." Along this narrow slip, the streets of which are straight and laid out at right angles after the French fashion,

ravines, through which the above-mentioned rivers flow, and is eight hundred feet above the level of the sea. The approach is through a long avenue of Filhaos or Madagascar fir and mangoes. The house (which is of two stories, and built entirely of wood,) has received large additions of late years, consists of a hall in the centre, with other rooms at the sides, in which, on account of the chilly nature of a situation so exposed, is to be seen an English grate—a rare appendage in tropical countries. The upper rooms contain sleeping-apartments for visitors. The usual out-buildings, called pavilions, of one story high, surround the house, and verandahs or colonnades, which are as much occupied as any part of the house, line both the front and back. The furniture, which is a specimen of that found in all the houses of the planters, is by no means sumptuous, but is suitable for the climate, being almost entirely brought from China, and is formed from the Bamboo and Indian reed. The prospect from the back of the house is extremely beautiful, comprehending an extensive view of the gardens and shrubberies,

did Mr. Hook conduct his new acquaintances; up one lane, down another, along the Rue Marengo, by the Government House, backwards and forwards, right and left, till every building of the least pretensions to importance had been visited by every possible mode of approach, and on each occasion honoured with a different name and fresh history. The Joss House was multiplied by six; the old East India Company barracks did duty for public asylums for lunatics, or private residences of the Queen of Madagascar; churches, prisons, the Royal College, and theatre, were examined again and again, and so on till the miserable party, completely fatigued with the extreme heat, and seeing no symptoms of a termination to the walk, pleaded inability to proceed. One ventured to observe, that, though of a much greater size than the

which are tastefully laid out, as well as the rich and varied landscape beyond. To the front are extensive lawns, adorned with neat parterres of flowers. Numerous cool and shady walks, which are impervious to the rays of the sun, line the steep sides of the plateau, which render the temperature comparatively cool, while the roads in the vicinity, which are in good repair, afford good equestrian exercise. At the end of the shrubberies is the 'Bout du Monde,' a majestic and almost perpendicular cliff, whose depths the eye is afraid to fathom. At its bottom is the Rivière Profonde, which, though a considerable stream, appears a mere rivulet, from the great depth of the ravine, the sides of which are covered with five or six stages of large trees, whose foliage, with its rich and varied tints, harmonizes well with the red soil of the cliff and the enormous grotesque masses of grey rock. The plain to the west of St. Louis is seen beyond the intersecting line, which mark the windings of the ravine, and 'Morne de la Decouverte,' a signal station on the right. In the distance is a fine view of the ocean." *England's Colonial Empire*. Vol. i. p. 205.

view from the harbour would have led him to suppose, the town exhibited a singular sameness of style in the principal edifices—a natural thing enough in an infant colony.

The prospect of a luxurious “tiffin,” which was awaiting their return, served in some manner to restore the spirits of the travellers, and they took their seats with a full determination of doing ample justice to the far-famed delicacies of the island. The first course presented to the eyes of the astonished but still unsuspecting strangers, comprised nearly every species of un-eatable that could be got together. An enormous gourd graced the centre of the table; strange de-appetizing dishes were placed around, and in turn pressed upon the attention of the guests.

“Allow me to offer you a little cat-curry,” exclaimed the host; “there is an absurd prejudice against these things in Europe I know, but *this* I can really recommend; or, perhaps, you would prefer a little devilled monkey; that is, I believe, a dish of fried snakes opposite you, Mr. J——.”

Mr. J—— recoiled in alarm.

“Hand these lizards round, they seem particularly fine.”

Nastiness after nastiness was proffered in vain; the perplexed Cockneys struggled hard to maintain a decent composure, but with difficulty kept their ground, before the unsavoury abominations. What was to be done!—it was clearly the *cuisine de pays*, and the host appeared evidently distressed at their want of appreciation of his fare. One gentleman at length, in sheer despair, thought he “*would* just try a lizard.”

"Pray do so," eagerly returned Hook; "you will find the flavour a little peculiar at first, I dare say; but it is astonishing how soon it becomes pleasant to the palate."

But however rapidly a taste for the saurian delicacy might be acquired, the adventurous individual in question was not destined to make the experiment. In endeavouring to help himself to one of these unpromising dainties, the tail became separated from its body—it was too much for his nerve—turning a little pale, he pushed aside his plate, and begged to be excused. Since the celebrated "feast after the manner of the ancients," such a collation had never been put down before hungry man: the jest, however, was not pushed to extremes, a second course succeeded; and, on the choice viands of which it consisted, the guests proceeded to fall with what appetite they might.

Equally absurd, though perhaps hardly becoming the dignity of a treasurer and accountant-general, was a piece of pleasantry played off at the expense of the authorities of the island! It was on the occasion of a public dinner given at the Government-house, and at which the governor himself, confined by ill health to his country residence, was unable to be present. The officer next in rank was, therefore, called upon to preside; but, whether from the soup or the fish, or the cucumber—if there happened to be any—disagreeing with him, or from whatever cause, he was compelled to quit the banquet at an early hour, and was conveyed, utterly incapable of either giving or receiving, any command, to his quarters. The task

of occupying the chair, and proposing the remainder of the loyal and usual toasts, now devolved on Hook ; and, as each separate health was given and duly signalled, it was responded to by an immediate salute from a battery in the square below, according to special orders. The appointed list having been gone through, the greater portion of the company departed ; but the chairman, so far from shewing any disposition to quit his post, begged gentlemen “ to fill their glasses, and drink a bumper to that gallant and distinguished officer, Captain Dobbs ”—up went the signal—bang ! bang ! bang ! roared the artillery. “ Lieutenant Hobbs ” followed, with the same result. “ Ensign Snobbs,” and bang ! bang ! bang ! greeted the announcement of his name. Quick as the guns could be reloaded, up again went the signal, and off went his majesty’s twenty-fours, to the honour, successively, of every individual present, soldier or civilian.

In vain the subaltern on duty, who had expected at the termination of the accustomed formalities to be permitted to join the party, sent up a remonstrance. The directions he had received were as imperative as those delivered by Denmark’s king :—

“ Let the kettle to the trumpet speak,
The trumpet to the cannoneer without,
The cannon to the heavens—the heaven to earth.”

Such a bombardment had not been heard since the capture of the island, and it was not till the noisy compliment had been paid to cook and scullion, who were summoned from the kitchen to return

thanks in *propria personâ*, and the powder as well as patience of the indignant gunners were exhausted, that the firing ceased. Something in the shape of a reprimand was talked of, but as, after all, the principal share of blame was not to be attached to the facetious deputy, the affair was permitted to rest.

In the year 1817, continued ill-health compelled Governor Farquhar to return for a time to England, and his place was supplied in the first instance by Major-General Hall, an officer in many respects the very reverse of his predecessor. A certain want of courtesy and abruptness of manner, presenting as they did so unfavourable a contrast to the kind and polished demeanour of Mr. Farquhar, added to the extreme severity of his administration, soon rendered him unpopular throughout the colony. "His seizure," observes Mr. Pridham, "of the foreign vessels in Port Louis, under the pretence that they had contravened the navigation laws, met with opposition even from the officers of government, who were in consequence superseded by him, but subsequently re-instated by the Home-government. The measures adopted to ensure the due observance of the laws relating to the suppression of the Slave-trade rendered him no less obnoxious. Arrests and deportations rapidly succeeded each other. The procureur-general was suspended, in consequence of his declining to support a course so extreme; and so general became the dissatisfaction that Major-General Hall was recalled at the expiration of the year."

Meanwhile, however unsatisfactory the appointment of this gentleman might have been to the great body

of the colonists, to Hook the change proved particularly disagreeable. In Mr. Farquhar he lost not only an indulgent superior but a kind friend; in his successor he found neither; nor was it long ere an act which, sanctioned though it might have been by custom, was undoubtedly illegal, drew upon him severe censure from the new deputy-governor. Having been in a great measure forced into a quarrel with one of his associates, a hostile meeting in the "Champ de Mars," terminating happily without bloodshed, was the consequence. On the affair reaching the ears of General Hall, he sent immediately for Mr. Hook, and having commented upon the offence in terms somewhat more severe than the latter deemed warrantable, told him that a repetition of it would be visited with instant dismissal from office, and with the infliction of such further penalties as the law provided. "I am determined," he added, "at all cost to put down duelling."

"But, sir," pleaded the delinquent, "constituted as society is, there are occasions when the vindication of one's character renders the 'Gothic appeal to arms' as necessary as defence of the person would do."

"Such occasions must be avoided," replied the Governor.

"But," continued the other, "it is not always in a man's power to avoid insult,—suppose, for example, a person were to address you yourself publicly, and say that he thought you were a meddling impertinent upstart,—what course would be left for you to pursue?"

"I can't conceive such a case possible, sir," was the reply.

“Can’t you, indeed,” replied Hook, “I can—*very*,—I wish you good morning.”

Such a tone was not exactly calculated to conciliate a man of General Hall’s disposition, and we view accordingly with less surprise the very decided, not to say harsh line of conduct that gentleman thought fit to adopt towards Hook on the termination of the examination, then pending, of the Treasury Chest.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MAURITIUS.—TRANSFER OF THE GOVERNMENT TO GENERAL HALL.
—COMMITTEE APPOINTED TO EXAMINE INTO THE STATE OF THE
PUBLIC CHEST.—ALLAN'S ACCUSATION OF MR. HOOK.—A SECOND
COMMITTEE APPOINTED.—DISCOVERY OF A LARGE DEFICIT.—
MR. HOOK'S ARREST.—HIS VOYAGE TO ENGLAND.—FAVOURABLE
OPINION OF THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL.—MR. HOOK ARRESTED AS
A DEBTOR TO THE CROWN.—HIS APPEAL TO LORD LIVERPOOL.—
FINAL DECISION OF THE AUDIT BOARD.—ANALYSIS OF THE
CHARGES.—MR. HOOK'S DEFENCE.

OF the unhappy result of the inquiry alluded to in the foregoing chapter, and of the mysterious particulars connected with it, we cannot undertake to give more than a brief and summary account; still less can we hope to succeed in reconciling contradictions, sifting evidence, and elucidating difficulties, the consideration of which occupied a board, composed of men of the highest abilities, and legal attainments, thoroughly conversant with the intricacies of colonial finance, upon which many of the questions hinge, and possessing access to every possible source of information, during a space of five years, and which to the last seems to have baffled their penetration. That Mr. Hook was equally unable to throw light upon the affair, appears on the face of his own examinations, and was, in fact, *totidem verbis*, admitted by himself; nor can we find any cause whatever to doubt the

assertion. We shall endeavour, nevertheless, to lay before the reader a short statement of the leading facts, and of the impression produced on us by a careful and dispassionate perusal of the various documents relating to the case, kindly permitted by the authorities of the Treasury.

It must be premised that in the year 1813, Mr. Theodore Hook, a young man whose education and habits, up to that time, had been such as hardly to qualify him for the common business of an accomptant's office, entered upon the complicated duties of Treasurer to a distant colony ; it must be remembered, moreover, that the island and its dependencies had but recently—some two years previously—fallen under the dominion of the British crown ; that its revenue was, and must have been in a state, more or less, of confusion, which, as it happened, was materially increased by the insufficiency and variable value of the currency, and would present peculiar obscurities and embarrassments, in addition to the ordinary difficulties of the situation ; and further, that the whole of Mr. Hook's clerks and assistants were appointed by government and not by him, and were in some cases—and this is a matter of some importance—men of colour, with whom, from the prevalent prejudice, not even a white servant could be induced to associate.

Up to November, 1817, every thing went on smoothly enough, when on the departure of Governor Farquhar, in consequence of ill-health, a committee was named, jointly, by him and General Hall, the Commander of the Forces, and who, as has been

stated, succeeded him as acting Governor, to examine into the state of the Treasury, with a view to the transfer of all pecuniary responsibility from the former to the latter officer. This committee comprised five officials who, from the nature of their appointments, civil and military, would be considered most competent for the task allotted to them, and in their report, dated November 19th, which distinguishes, with much particularity, every description of value in the chest, a full discharge was given to Mr. Hook up to the date of the transfer of the treasury to the new Government. But here, at the very outset, occurs a specimen of those extraordinary inconsistencies and contradictions in which the whole affair is involved. The audit in question which would naturally be, and which was in the first instance declared to be, of a more complete and graver nature than usual, was subsequently pronounced by the very same individuals to have been a short hurried examination, and regarded at the time as a mere matter of form; an assertion hardly reconcilable with the details of that proceeding as given by Mr. Hook, and left uncontradicted by his accusers.

“At the time of the transfer,” he says, “the chief secretary of the Government sat at one end of a table, at the other end I sat, with the box containing the vouchers; on either side the table sat the other members of the commission; the chief secretary held in his hand the list of vouchers, and, as he called it over, the voucher named was handed by me to the member on my left hand, who, having examined it, handed it round to every member, who examined it also, till it

was finally returned to me. It was after this minute examination, the committee proceeded to the cash-room, and after taking every measure they thought fit, without let or hindrance from me, they signed a certificate, now in the hands of the Audit Board, that they had examined the vouchers, the balance, and the treasury, and that not only the balances were correct as to the accounts, but that they were correct as to the amount in hand."*

Hurried or not, no suspicion appears to have been entertained of the accuracy of the report until about two months afterwards, when Mr. Allan (a black man) who was chief clerk in Mr. Hook's office, and who, it is to be observed, had previously fallen under his superior's displeasure from official irregularities, and had been threatened in consequence with dismissal, addressed a letter to General Hall, stating the "fact of the impropriation of the public money" by Mr. Hook, consequent upon an omission to debit himself with the sum of \$7,150 dollars (about 9000*l.*) received by him as treasurer in December, 1816. Of this omission Allan admitted himself to have been aware for a period of about fifteen months, declaring that he had contented himself with pointing it out to Mr. Chaillet, Mr. Hook's assistant. Here, however, he was met with a flat denial on the part of that individual, who attested further that the falsified account was actually in Allan's own hand-writing, and made out entirely by him.

In a second letter to the Governor, Allan, whose

* "Letter from Theodore Hook to the Lords of the Treasury," April 12th, 1822.

style and phraseology are all along peculiar, and at last utterly incoherent, laments in terms of great anxiety and regret the step he has taken, and evinces considerable apprehension of "injurious personal consequences" from the disclosure he has made.—A third letter followed, dated January 28th, 1818, betraying still more decided marks of derangement, and, among other things, a statement, utterly and entirely refuted, of a tender on the part of Hook to provide him an allowance of twenty-five dollars a month, "on the condition of his leaving the colony, by the earliest and first opportunity that might offer."

In consequence of these communications, General Hall appointed a second committee for the purpose of "examining the books of the treasury department, as well as the state of the chest," &c., who commenced their duties on the 11th of February, by taking the evidence of Allan. Other matters intervening, his further examination was postponed for several days, and before it could be resumed, viz., on the 21st, he destroyed himself, having in the interval given unequivocal proofs of a mind labouring under the influence of wild and extravagant insanity.

The commissioners, meanwhile, were actively pursuing their investigations, the results of which not only confirmed the fact of the omission in the accounts to which their attention had been called, but exhibited an actual deficit in the contents of the chest, to no less a sum than 62,717 dollars. On the 24th of February, Hook stoutly protesting that "the deficiency was one which could not in the nature of human possibility exist—its magnitude put it out of

the question," was suspended from his office; and, after undergoing several *viva voce* examinations before the commissioners, in the course of which it was made clear, not less to his own consternation than to the surprise of others, that an enormous balance against him *did* exist, with respect of which he was unable to suggest the slightest explanation or clue; he was finally taken into custody on the 1st of March.

Of the consequent degradations and miseries to which he was unnecessarily if not illegally subjected, we give the particulars nearly in his own words.—He was, he states, in his letter to the Lords of the Treasury, dragged from a friend's house in Port Louis, at eleven o'clock at night, and taken first to his own residence, then hurried by torchlight at midnight to the common dungeon, his servant being allowed as a favour to carry a mattress for him to sleep upon. On his arrival at the prison, the jailor having represented that in consequence of the effects of the dreadful hurricane of the preceding night, there was no cell habitable, he was, after remaining there until nearly three o'clock in the morning, "from physical necessity" admitted to bail and permitted to remain, under the surveillance of a French police, at the house of a gentleman who had accompanied him:—A proceeding by the way, pleasantly described by the Colonial Attorney-General as simply taking "*un cautionnement pour la représentation de sa personne.*"

At the same time an Extent was issued against his property; a measure which the judges charged with its execution seem to have considered so extreme

that they evinced an unwillingness to adopt it, save with his own consent, which, however, was given at once and unhesitatingly. The proceeds of the sale of every article he possessed amounted to 3,407*l.*, and he was sent on board deprived of every comfort, and almost without the necessaries or decencies of life. To such extremity, indeed, was he reduced, that he was indebted to a servant, of whom he speaks in terms of no ordinary gratitude, for the restoration of a small writing-case purchased at the auction for *ten shillings* !

On the 22nd of April, having been delivered into the hands of a military guard, under the command of Captain Pritchard of the 56th Regt., who treated him with every possible kindness and indulgence, he set sail for England. The passage was tedious and dangerous.* For a month they suffered off the Cape of Good Hope a tremendous gale of wind, in which all the privations of short allowance, and the prospect of utter starvation, were lost in the more pressing horrors of the danger of foundering at sea ; for six weeks he had no other sustenance than half a pound of mouldy biscuit and half a pint of water *per diem*. At the expiration of nine melancholy months, including a stay at the Cape, whence he addressed an appeal to Earl Bathurst, he returned to England,

* Here (at St. Helena) he encountered the late Lord Charles Somerset, on his way to assume the governorship of the Cape. Lord Charles, who had met him in London occasionally, and knew nothing of his arrest, said, " I hope you are not going home for your health, Mr. Hook." " Why," said Theodore, " I am sorry to say, they think there is something wrong in the *chest*."—*Quarterly Review*, vol. lxxiii. p. 73.

“without one penny upon the face of the earth.” And yet, such is the conciliatory effect of long association, that even he,

“Regained his freedom with a sigh.”

He observes, in one of his novels published not long afterwards—“To see a person, or to visit a place, or to quit it for the last time, is at best a melancholy business, even though the person be indifferent, or the place in itself uninteresting. I remember feeling a regret in leaving, avowedly for the ‘last time,’ an inconvenient cabin in an ill-found ship, at the close of a tedious voyage, full of dangers and difficulties, cares and anxieties.”

The moment he arrived at Portsmouth, the Attorney and Solicitor-General having previously pronounced that there were no grounds to sustain any kind of criminal proceedings against him, he was released from custody—a decision which certainly serves to shew that the severity with which he had been treated, was no less unwarrantable, than it would appear uncalled-for.

He lost no time in repairing to London, where he was immediately, January 19, 1819, summoned to appear before the Board of Colonial Audit, and submitted to a series of distracting examinations, *vivâ voce* and otherwise, recurring at brief intervals, during a period of three years. At first, a balance appeared against him amounting to about 15,000*l*. This, on the singularly fortunate appearance of an important witness, was reduced to 12,885*l*, and a report shewing this result and the evidence on which it was founded, was

presented to the Lords of the Treasury in the autumn of 1821, and submitted to the law-officers of the Crown. But nothing had been elicited to connect Mr. Hook with the appropriation of the money; and, after a laborious review of the case, and a careful comparison of the whole mass of testimony, the original opinion was confirmed, that, however irregular and improper the conduct of Mr. Hook appeared to have been, and whatever might be his civil responsibility as a debtor to the public, there was nothing to warrant a criminal prosecution.

In December 1821, in consequence of the above report, a writ of Extent was issued against his person and property, and the amount of his debt to the Crown diminished by the sum of forty pounds,—at the same time, his few books were seized by his landlord as security for rent.

From a sponging-house in Shire Lane, a narrow noisome alley on the eastern side of Temple Bar, (lately swept and garnished, and named anew,) where, in the hope of a speedy release, he remained lingering on for nine months, in preference to removing to the King's Bench, he addressed the following appeal to Lord Liverpool:—

*“ The Right Honourable the Earl of Liverpool, K.G.,
&c., &c., &c.*

“ London, December 18, 1823.

“ MY LORD,—I trust the peculiarity and difficulty of my present situation, will excuse the liberty I am taking in addressing your Lordship personally upon the state of my case. I had indulged the hope, that

I might have been permitted to explain away any of its points which might have appeared unsatisfactory to the Government, before the writ which has been enforced against me had been acted upon. I was deceived, and am, as I presume your Lordship knows, in custody for a debt which I dispute, and the existence of which, to its present extent, is highly problematical.

“To observe, now, to your Lordship, that the accounts in which the errors appeared, whence has arisen the deficiency stated to exist, had been audited and passed as correct for two years; to say that all those accounts were made up by my chief clerk, Mr. Allan, who, if he had no sinister view in making the mistake, at all events wilfully concealed it throughout those two years; to say that the balance upon which I gave over the treasury to General Hall's government was struck and made out by Mr. Allan, and that he eventually destroyed himself on the second day of the investigation of the accounts, would be quite superfluous now, because those facts have already been considered by the Colonial Audit Board as perfectly unimportant.

“I shall decline referring to a certificate signed by the five principal civil and military officers of the Government of Mauritius, that they counted the treasury on the 19th of November, 1817, and found it correct, and, therefore, gave me on that day, under their hands, a full discharge up to that period, of the total amount of my balance, because it has been held by the Colonial Audit Board that, as these officers did not actually count the treasury, as they certified that

they had, they were mistaken. I may, perhaps, be permitted to remark that the favourable construction put upon their conduct for a neglect of duty, and an erroneous statement, is strikingly different from the colouring given to what are never called mistakes when I happen to be the object of accusation.

“It is not possible, my lord, under my present circumstances, to go over the whole report of the colonial auditors to awaken the government to a reconsideration of my case ; after having been illegally sent to England upon an informal and unrecognised warrant, deprived of my office, after having been stripped of every particle of property I possessed in the world, by the terrible process of Extent, I now find myself, at the instance of the Colonial Audit Board, suffering under the same formidable process. * * *

“I cannot stop here to expatiate upon the merits of the case which has been made against me, by examinations and cross-examinations of myself against myself for three years consecutively, the earliest of these three years being nearly three years removed in point of time from the date of the transaction.

“The chairman of the Colonial Board is a lawyer, and with his talents and professional skill, armed as he was with every document he required, and aided by the suggestions and research of the whole establishment, I was doomed to contend. Reduce the whole of the proceedings to one fair unsophisticated question, and I throw back boldly the imputations with which the Colonial Audit Board have so liberally loaded me. Under my present circumstances, perhaps I may be allowed, in appealing to your lordship,

to say that imprisonment for debt is not intended as punishment for crime, and if imprisonment be persisted in when the object of its severity has already been deprived of every particle of property he possessed, and has not the means of payment, it has so much the character of persecution that, as I need not remind your lordship, the mild laws of England have provided a remedy for insolvent debtors in matters between subject and subject—it cannot be feared in England that the Crown is more vindictive towards its creditors than an individual, although its processes are more severe.

“I apprehend, most humbly, my lord, that the debt alleged to be due from me is not only capable of great reduction, but that, considering the whole of it to be proved, the amount to be paid in England to replace the sum of 12,000*l.* in Mauritius would, according to the present rate of exchange, not exceed 7,000*l.* or 8,000*l.* at the most; and, although I have no means of paying the sum thus reduced, I most humbly submit that, while it remains an undecided amount, and an unclosed account, that upon giving security for my personal appearance in the full alleged amount, I might be permitted to have my liberty.

“If, my lord, I am kept in confinement, my health, now seriously injured, will forsake me, and deprived by the restraint of the means by which I might eventually retrieve myself in the world, I must fall a victim to conduct which may have been officially inattentive, but which my heart tells me has never been morally guilty.

"I throw myself thus hastily and abruptly upon your lordship, in the hope that, under all the circumstances of the case, your lordship will see cause to relax the dreadful severity of the law.

"I remain, my lord,

"Your lordship's most obedient humble servant,

"THEODORE E. HOOK."

Some considerable time elapsed before this letter worked its effect; he had, in the interval, wisely removed from the house of Hemp, the sheriff's officer, and taken up his abode "within the rules of the Bench," where, of course, he enjoyed comparative freedom. On the 31st of March, the final decision was given by the Lords of the Treasury on the various reports submitted to them from the Colonial Audit Office, in pursuance of which the Extent against his person was taken off, and he was set at liberty, but with the distinct declaration that he was in no degree "exonerated from his liability to the debt, if he should hereafter have the means of discharging it." A supplementary judgment was issued from the Treasury in the May following, reflecting upon the conduct of various individuals concerned in the transactions at Mauritius, who were respectively visited with suspension from office, and admonition according to their different degrees of culpability.

It is, as we have before stated, quite impossible to follow the Commissioners of Audit, through an inquiry protracted for nearly five years; it will be sufficient to offer a few remarks upon the various heads under which the charges were finally ranged, viz :—

1. Omission to enter in the Treasury Accounts for the month of December, 1816, the sum of 37,150 dollars.

2. Deficit in the Treasury Chest.

3. Issue of Duplicate Treasury Notes.

4. Loan to Messrs. K—— and B——.

5. Transactions relating to the purchase of specie, and the substitution of paper for it, in the Treasury Chest.

6. Unauthorized advances made by Mr. Hook out of the Public Chest.*

As regards the third, fourth, and sixth counts, little need be said ; whatever may be thought of the treasurer's care and prudence, here at least his honour stands unaffected. The issue of the duplicate notes was the result of a blunder which clearly did not originate with him ; which involved no loss to the State, and one which he was the first to detect and expose. It is admitted by the Commissioners themselves that but for this disclosure by Mr. Hook, the double issue might, and probably would, have escaped detection until the whole of the Treasury paper was called in and replaced by a new issue ; and that, in the interim, Mr. Hook, but for this, his own act, would have had credit for 5,000 dollars more, in diminution of the deficit in the Treasury.

“It is most improbable,” they say, in their report, “that if he had been conscious of any such secret and improper transaction, he should have rendered the

* There were some minor charges advanced by Allan, but which, speedily refuted and abandoned, only tend to depreciate the value of his evidence in other respects.

deficiency more glaring, and increased the probability of detection, by making himself accountable for so much more specie as received from the collectors than was in truth paid to him." This is manifestly a very important admission, and not without its influence upon the other particulars of the charge.

So as respects the loan to Messrs. K — and B —, the extent of his offence seems to have been a charitable unwillingness to drive a respectable house into bankruptcy by pressing them for cash at a juncture when he knew their inability to meet the demand; time was given, the credit of the French merchants saved, and the money *paid*. That, in permitting this indulgence, Hook was acting without the knowledge, and indeed in opposition to the directions of the Governor, is very true. Let him bear the blame duly attaching to an act of unprofessional weakness, to use the harshest word, of which *his* creditors certainly were not guilty.

To the same easy good-nature is to be attributed certain trifling advances of salary made to his brother officials, men with whom he was on terms of intimate friendship, and from whom, from the nature of the case, their pay passing through his hands, the debt could be and was, readily recovered. In both these cases let it be clearly borne in mind that Hook derived no advantage whatever from the irregularity; nothing like the acceptance of any gratuity or percentage is ever hinted against him, and the contrary is clearly established by voluntary affidavits.

We come now to the "Transactions relating to the purchase of specie, and the substitution of paper for

it in the Treasury Chest." Here an almost insurmountable difficulty presents itself in arriving at the exact facts, and in estimating the weight due to each, in the consideration of the case—a difficulty arising not only from the complicity of the transactions themselves, the shifting and obscure grounds on which they were founded, and the imperfectly organized system of conducting them; but from the confusion, a hundred-fold confounded by the intricate nature of the subject-matter, in which all the accounts relating to them are involved.

An idea of some of the obstacles that meet us may be derived from a glance at the condition of the metallic currency of the island, which consisted of coins and tokens, French, Chinese, Indian, &c., differing from each other not more in the weight than in the assay, and ever fluctuating in value from a constantly and capriciously shifting rate of exchange. Cash payments appear rarely to have been made in an uniform coinage, but commonly to have contained specimens of many, and sometimes nearly all denominations; and, consequently, to have represented an amount requiring some nicety of calculation, and which would be in a measure dependent on the date. It is obvious how great an advantage a familiarity with this intricate subject would have given a dishonest subordinate over his inexperienced and unsuspecting superior, and to what a field of speculation it would invite. Mistakes, telling now against, and now for Mr. Hook, and signed by his own hand, occur in every page, and bear witness to the extreme negligence that seems to have pervaded every department of the Treasury.

With respect to the transactions to which we are now immediately referring, they appear to have originated in the depreciating tendency of the Government-paper, which was generally current at about eight per cent. discount; but which, after the tremendous conflagration in 1816, during which the little capital of the island—in both senses of the word—was nearly destroyed, fell considerably in value. This difference, however, the Government never formally admitted, a circumstance tending to still further confusion; and, by consequence, sums would be constantly paid into and out of its hands, varying considerably in value from that which they nominally bore, and which demanded, therefore, the most exact accuracy in entry.

Upon a minute scrutiny of his own books there appeared a balance against Mr. Hook, independent of the omitted item, amounting to about 6000*l*. It was in vain that he protested against the correctness of the decision; his own accounts were the accusers, his own signatures bore witness against him: of the existence of some grave error he declared himself confident, but where it lurked he was utterly unable to offer a conjecture. By a singular piece of good fortune, a colonial clerk, with whom he had had numerous dealings, arrived at Edinburgh; not a little against his wish, this gentleman was summoned to London in 1821, and in the course of eleven answers—Hook says three—relieved the latter from half the amount of surcharge: the remaining moiety he continued to the last unable to shake off. The discrepancy arose, he states, and with great show of probability, from

“transactions precisely of the same nature and under similar circumstances” with that part which he had already invalidated, except that, from embracing the more general operations of his office, they were more varied, and mixed up with a plurality of persons who had daily intercourse with the colonial treasury, and whose presence in England to give evidence he had not an equal advantage of procuring.

At one time, indeed, he thought he had (by the discovery of a singular coincidence in amount between two sums supposed to have been received at different times, but which he maintained to have been one and the same payment) obtained a clue to the mystery. Proof was, however, wanting to establish the identity contended for, and the commissioners were, of course, unable to grant an acquittance;* at the same time,

* In the “Quarterly” there occurs the following passage:—
“On a certain page there appeared as paid in to the credit of the Crown two different sums—one of Spanish dollars the other of sicca rupees. Hook had nothing to object—there was the record with his own signature at the foot of the page. Far down in the process of investigation *here*, in the spring of 1823, it chanced that Hook one morning had occasion to look over a totally different document, in which appeared numerous entries, both of sums in dollars and sums in rupees. He had to ascertain the precise relative value of these coins at the specified date. A little later in the day that particular page fell for perhaps the hundredth time under his eye—he was fresh from the comparative computation—behold the sum in dollars and that in rupees, entered one immediately under the other on that same page, being turned into sterling money, produced each to a minute fraction the same identical amount. It was *primâ facie* impossible that two payments, one from America, one from India, of precisely the same amount to sixpence three farthings, should have been made at the Mauritius treasury on the same day, one immediately after the other. By

they took occasion to point out as most important for the consideration of the Lords of the Treasury, that the extreme carelessness with which Mr. Hook, in his returns to the governor, charged himself with so much more specie than he had actually received, strongly repelled the supposition of any wilful purpose on his part secretly to withdraw the specie, and to supply its place with paper currency.

Up to this point we think, then, nothing occurs to warrant even a suspicion of Mr. Hook's honesty, but much, on the contrary, to establish an habitual want of caution almost, if not entirely, irreconcilable with the pursuance of a system of daring and ingenious plunder. It remains to consider the original charge brought against him by William Allan—that of omitting to enter the receipt of 37,150 dollars, together with the actual deficit in the chest. That there was something beyond negligence in this case is clear: the money was received, was not duly entered, and was

what was in this case a singular piece of good fortune, the clerk who made the entries was in England, and could be got at. After rubbing his head for a time, he remembered distinctly that the money was paid in dollars, and immediately turned into rupees for the governor's convenience in some bill negotiation with Calcutta. The two entries ought to have been made on opposite pages, and the sum was struck off Hook's debt the moment these facts were made intelligible to the commissioners."—*Quarterly Review*, vol. lxxii. p. 83.

The writer of the above account will, we trust, pardon the correction of some important errors therein, which, as silence might imply assent, we feel compelled to make. A re-examination of the "Reports," &c., will convince him that he has here confounded two classes of transactions, perfectly distinct in themselves, and followed by opposite results. The evidence of the clerk, who,

not forthcoming. A sum, amounting to about 9000*l.* sterling, was unquestionably abstracted from the treasury, either after, or, as seems more probable, before the examination at the time of the transfer. As the number of the bundles of notes only was counted, and not one of these opened to verify its supposed value, the fraud might easily have escaped the scrutiny of the committee.

Now it is material, in the first place, to observe, that the document in which the omission occurred was not in Mr. Hook's handwriting, but appears to have been the joint production of Allan and another assistant. Secondly, that the testimony, on oath, of these two individuals is in direct contradiction, the one to the other. Thirdly, that, although the sum itself, the produce of the sale of commissariat bills, is not entered, yet the premiums at which they were sold were noted, and plain though indirect evidence thus afforded on its very face, of the inaccuracy of the account; an error which, had he been implicated in the transac-

however, did not make the entries, referred exclusively to transactions between the government and the military cashier, and was indeed at once admitted by the board. The two entries maintained by Mr. Hook to be of one and the same payment, occurred in accounts relating to transactions between the government and the government-broker, with which the clerk in question had nothing whatever to do, and in respect to which he was not even examined. Further, it appears that the two sums did not correspond exactly in amount, nor did the entries bear the same date, one being made in September and the other in October; finally, the sum, about 3,000*l.*, never was struck off Mr. Hook's debt, but remained a *casus belli* to the last, precisely because the alleged facts never were made intelligible to the commissioners.

tion, Mr. Hook might easily have corrected or concealed, and the neglect of which exhibited a degree of clumsiness unlikely to have been committed by a man of his "extraordinary intelligence and firmness," however compatible with the crackbrained, irresolute character of his subordinate. And fourthly, there must be noted the impossibility of Hook's having contrived the embezzlement without the collusion of his clerks, and the equally apparent facility of its having been effected by them without the knowledge of their superior; one, indeed, we have seen, confessed that for fifteen months he was aware of the error, of which there is nothing to shew that Hook was ever cognisant, till it was forced for the first time upon his notice by the commissioners.

As to the precise mode in which the robbery was effected, it is of course bootless, without a perfect acquaintance with the *locale* and the mode of conducting public business, even to hazard a conjecture. It is clear that two persons besides the Treasurer had legal and recognised access to the Chest; and that for above a year, including the period at which the error was committed, the key was entirely out of his possession: further, it appears that, during the fire before alluded to, the said Chest was tumbled out in the middle of the night into an open barrack-square, where it remained, out of even his nominal custody, during twelve or fourteen hours of the greatest confusion; and that subsequently the cash was kept partly in a hired building, partly in Hook's private house. Opportunities surely were supplied in abundance for eluding a vigilance far more active than the juvenile

and joyous *custos* dreamed of bestowing upon his charge. He, indeed, strangely enough, as it seems to us, pertinaciously rejects the idea of any burglary having been perpetrated; though why that should be impossible at Port Louis, then notoriously the refuge of scoundrels of all castes and countries, which any "cracksman" of moderate professional skill would have readily accomplished at London, it is hard to determine. Hook, for a novelist, shews a marvellous want of appreciation of the talents of these gentry. The authors of "Jack Sheppard" and "Paul Clifford" would have been more alive to their danger.

But, supposing Mr. Hook himself to have been the delinquent, the question necessarily arises, how was the money disposed of? Ten or twelve thousand pounds are not to be run through in the course of a couple of years in a small colonial town without attracting notice; they do not commonly disappear and make no sign.* It was this difficulty which, doubtless, suggested the supposition that he had remitted large sums to England; but these remittances, when traced, were shewn to have been of comparatively trifling amount, sent home during the first year of his residence for the purpose of discharging debts he had left on embarkation, and were further proved to have been bor-

* General Hall does, indeed, bring against him some vague charges of extravagant expenditure, but which he admits to be grounded not on his personal knowledge, but merely on common report. It must be remembered, however, that for a bachelor Mr. Hook's income was at that time large, holding as he did, besides the appointments already mentioned, one or two others—he was private secretary to Governor Farquhar—of minor importance.

rowed in the Isle of France on the credit of his salary, and to have been paid off by instalments. Horse-racing is next represented as the probable whirlpool in which the proceeds of his supposed treachery were engulfed. On this point, however, the tables seem completely turned upon his accuser. So far from suffering losses in prosecuting this truly very perilous amusement, the adduced records of the Mauritius turf club shew him to have been particularly successful; and the very furniture, &c., which also attracted the notice of General Hall, was shewn to have been actually purchased with his winnings at a recent meeting.

That his conscience fully bore him out in indignantly repelling the charge of having appropriated any part of the sum to his own use is a conclusion justified, we think, by (if not positive proof) at least the evident balance of probabilities,—so far as it can be struck in a matter so imperfectly accessible—and perfectly independent of the *argumentum ab homine*, which, with those who knew his honourable and generous disposition, will be allowed no little weight. It is with no slight degree of satisfaction that we find this view confirmed by testimony entitled, on various grounds, to the highest consideration. One of the three commissioners, whose scrutiny served to bring the defalcation to light—an officer of unimpeachable honour, the very man selected to succeed Mr. Hook *pro tempore* in his office, who had the whole of the establishment at his command and under his control, to whom every paper connected with the inquiry was submitted, and, as may be fairly inferred, the man

most familiar with the intricacies of the case, and best qualified to pronounce upon his merits, not only expressed his conviction "that Mr. Hook had none of the deficient money, and moreover *that he could not have had it,*" but openly backed his opinion by seeking the latter out on the first opportunity, and renewing his acquaintance with him in England.

As regards the deficiency itself, Hook fully and fairly admitted his responsibility to make it good to the amount of about 9,000*l.* currency. The Audit Board claimed more than 12,000*l.* sterling. They had originally pointed at a much larger sum; it was next fixed at upwards of 15,000*l.*; and, subsequently, brought down to about 12,000*l.* Of the extreme rigour with which the Extent, repeated in England, against his property was put into execution he did not complain, pleading only for personal liberty and for certain arrears of salary to be admitted as a set-off, and proposing to secure payment of the remainder of the debt by insuring his life. Neither of these last suggestions appear to have been attended to.

It is worthy of remark that, with a generous forbearance, Hook refrains throughout, in the absence of direct evidence, from any attempt to fix the guilt upon his assistants, never insinuating, save where his own exculpation imperatively demands it, anything to their disadvantage. Previously to his quitting the Mauritius, he had taken measures in the hope of tracing part of the plunder to several people, but without success. Of one individual, more especially—a person not immediately connected with his office—he asserts that he entertained grave suspicions, which were

strengthened on the passage from the Cape of Good Hope to England, and which he subsequently endeavoured to follow up by means of his friends in the Isle of France. He was again unsuccessful, and the name of the man does not escape him.

In other respects his defensive documents are certainly liable to objection; a tone and temper characterise them ill-becoming his position, and of which his maturer judgment must have disapproved. He endeavours by taunt and invective to lash men into hostility who, in the course of their painful duties, appear actuated by none other than a desire of deciding with strict impartiality between the public and its servant. Where is the wonder if he in some measure succeeded!

Again, his line of defence is unquestionably weakened from an ill-advised pertinacity with which he struggles to maintain a post untenable from the first—negligent he was: why not admit it? A negligence shared and perhaps encouraged, by nearly every one connected with his department, is exhibited on the face of every account brought under review, and elicited at every stage of the inquiry. He seems, indeed, to have considered the principal duties of his appointment to have consisted in the quarterly discharge of certain pecuniary formalities, and the signing from time to time such statements and accounts as were presented to him by his clerks. The consequence naturally is that no sooner is he questioned as to transactions attested by his own signature, than he becomes lost in a maze of contradictions and inaccuracies which, as is obvious to the Lords of the

Treasury themselves, are to be imputed to inattention and ignorance rather than design.

That some inconsistencies and seeming contradictions should be elicited in the course of a series of severe cross-examinations, continued at various intervals, for upwards of three years, was hardly to be wondered at. As he himself reasonably argues, these examinations were very frequent and very protracted; they related to every possible detail of his business, from the day he entered upon office until the day he left it; and in labouring to explain a wilderness of papers, and an infinity of items, when pressed to recollect his reason for this, and his motive for that, when even the fact itself was forgotten, no human memory and no power of intellect (for he was often questioned not as to matter of fact, but as to matter of inference) could ensure a perfect agreement or undeviating consistency. And it is also proper to observe that the very inconsistencies complained of arise, not unfrequently, from a candid acquiescence in the spirit and purport of the queries, from a seemingly honest endeavour to get at the truth quite irrespective of the effect his admissions may have upon his case, and that in no instance is anything like shuffling or evasion discernible. It may be, perhaps, too much to contend that all this is strongly corroborative of innocence, but we cannot but feel, nevertheless, that had he really been profligate and unprincipled he might have adopted a far more efficient and plausible defence; the guilty are for the most part wiser in their generation, and Hook certainly was not deficient in ingenuity.

Blameworthy he was ; and for the thoughtlessness of his youth he suffered—how long ! how bitterly ! those who only witnessed his intellectual triumphs little suspected. But after all, was his the only, or the chief head on which reproof should alight ? What is to be thought of the prudence and propriety of conduct of those, who set their heedless friend among the “slippery places ?” That they were not aware of the peculiar perils that awaited him at the Mauritius is probable enough, but the promoting any young man, untrained by a previous apprenticeship, to the head of a department where not only steadiness and vigilance, but information and experience are necessary for the discharge of its ordinary duties, appears to us not more irregular than unwise ; in the case of one of Theodore’s known and notorious volatility, it would seem to amount to absolute insanity. Genius and wit are among the unbought gifts of nature, but something of study and application is needful to furnish forth a decent financier and arithmetician ; the Rule of Three does not fix itself intuitively in the mind ; a certain expenditure of paper, a moderate application of birch, are requisite for its establishment. Treasurers and clerks do not commonly spring ready-made, Minerva-like, into the world with all the organs and attributes of Cocker fully developed. Theodore Hook was born the poet, but most assuredly was not fit for the Accountant-General !

Yet another point remains—one not altogether clear of the mystification characterizing the whole case. How came it to pass that no attempt whatever

should have been made, on the part of the ex-Treasurer, to liquidate any portion of the debt? a liability just and stringent, and to a considerable amount, he admitted, as well in his public defence, as in the circle of his private friends. To one, at least, of the earliest and most intimate of these he earnestly declared, that he should never be a happy man till every shilling of the actual deficit was replaced. The assertion may, perhaps, be said to have held good to the letter,—but Hook's subsequent conduct would seem to supply a practical disavowal of the sentiment.

We are credibly informed, that in 1823 four gentlemen, whose names are before us, proposed to satisfy all legal demands against him, but that he firmly refused their liberal offer, alleging, it is averred, that any payment from him, or on his behalf, would be construed into a tacit admission of guilt, and a recognition of the justice of the award—concessions that he was determined no power on earth should wring from him. Something, perhaps, might be urged in support of such a position, on the score of the vast difference between the balance put forth by the Commissioners, and that which he maintained and believed to be really and justly due—a difference which, when the alleged over-surge, his arrears of salary, and the depreciated value of the paper currency (according to which, he contended, the sum ought to have been cast) are taken into consideration, will be found to amount to something more than one half, viz., 7,000*l.* or 8,000*l.*

But it appears probable rather that his pride took alarm, that he recoiled from the idea of receiving the

money as a donation, and was at the same time indisposed to render the debt urgent and inevitable by converting it into one of honour. Nor can there be any doubt that he entertained some vague and not perhaps very unreasonable expectation, that something would be done for him. We can but believe, had he brought the interest, which for many years he unquestionably possessed, to bear upon the point (but this again his pride forbade), either that *novæ tabulæ* would have been granted, and the claim fully and formally abandoned, or that, if nominally retained upon the Treasury books, a distinct pledge would have been given that it should never be enforced. An intimation to some such effect may possibly have reached him, and, in point of fact, the latter was the line of conduct actually adopted by successive administrations while he lived. During that period no further proceedings were instituted against him, and, seemingly, all remembrance of his delinquency had passed away. It was not until his death that the Crown reasserted its right.

There is not, under all the circumstances of the case, so much ground for wonder that he should have been content to acquiesce in an act of oblivion, which appeared to have been passed by common consent, and which he fondly hoped would have been final; and that he should have trusted in a manner to the chapter of accidents, and waited, to use his own expression, "to see what would turn up." Indeed, during the latter portion of his life, it is difficult to point out what other course remained open to him.

His industry was certainly unflagging, and his

income, as must be confessed, large, averaging, for some years after the establishment of the "Bull," from two to three thousand pounds per annum; but—that which makes the richest needy—it was invariably forestalled.

Under these painful circumstances, fighting from day to day against a host of clamorous creditors, the dormant claims of the Crown were of necessity postponed to a more convenient season, even if they were not considered virtually extinct. He had done the State some service, and he knew it; and, under the influence of that reflection, he might with an accommodating casuistry have readily brought himself to believe, that the moral obligation was as completely discharged as the legal one appeared to be forgotten; and, after all, were the balance to be fairly struck between his country and himself, few persons we think would be inclined to pronounce Theodore Hook to be the debtor.

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. HOOK'S RESIDENCE AT SOMERS-TOWN. — EXTRAORDINARY INSTANCE OF IMPROVISATION.—TOM HILL'S SONG.—ANECDOTES. —MR. HOOK'S ARREST UNDER A WRIT OF EXTENT.—HIS CONFINEMENT IN SHIRE LANE.—REMOVES TO LODGINGS "WITHIN THE RULES."—HIS DISCHARGE FROM CUSTODY IN 1825.—TAKES A HOUSE AT PUTNEY.—"TENTAMEN."—"THE ARCADIAN."—"EXCHANGE NO ROBBERY."

It has appeared convenient to place before the reader, at one view, all the particulars connected with the Mauritius deficit, and not to interrupt the narrative by the introduction of contemporaneous matter; much, however, had been undergone by Hook, and much had been effected towards the re-establishment of his position in the world, ere the final edict issued, in 1825, from the Treasury chambers. Throughout the whole distressing affair, — his prospects blighted, his appointment absolutely gone, his character impeached,—he, nevertheless, preserved an indomitable spirit, sustained, we may well believe, by a conscience free from grave offence. His gaiety neither deserted him under the dangers and privations suffered on board the transport, which was to him, literally, "a prison with the chance of being drowned," nor did it droop in the depressing and impure atmosphere of the Shire Lane sponging-house.

A friend who had ever remained kind and true

visited him during his confinement, and, being struck with the comparative spaciousness of his apartment, observed, by way of consolation : —

“ Why, really, Hook, you are not so badly lodged here, after all ; this is a cheerful room enough.”

“ Oh yes ! ” returned Theodore, in a significant tone, as he pointed to the iron defences outside, “ remarkably so—*barring* the windows ! ”

Even the tough nature of the bailiff himself was softened by the inexhaustible vivacity of his guest, and he celebrated the departure of the latter from durance vile by a grand entertainment, at which Hook, with a singular freedom from that sensitiveness which afterwards possessed him, supplied the chief staple of mirth from his own misfortunes.

Soon after his return to England, he took up his abode in a small lodging in Somers-town, at no great distance from the spot where Sir Alexander Boswell and the unfortunate John Scott fell. Here he remained until his arrest in 1823, and here, we believe, originated that lamentable connection with the mother of his children (a young woman up to that time, we are told, of unimpeachable character, and who certainly devoted herself to his interests) which, with his warm heart and honourable feelings, he could not dissolve, and which he yet had never sufficient courage to render sacred and indissoluble. Here, too, many of his former friends, Mathews, Tom Hill (who had himself sunk in the world, and been compelled to throw up the retreat at Sydenham) and Terry among the number, gathered round him, and in their society many of the mad scenes of former days were re-enacted.

We are indebted to a friend for a slight record of one of these memorable symposia. It was held at the house of one, himself well skilled to keep the table in a roar, "the witty and agreeable barrister," Mr. Dubois. Among others, Hook, Tom Hill, the elder Mathews, and the Rev. — J—n, were present. The last-mentioned gentleman was led to give a very interesting account of a casual interview he once enjoyed in a stage-coach, with a brother of Burns, and had repeated, in a most touching manner, some unpublished verses of the poet addressed to his beloved relative.

"Sir," said Mathews, at the conclusion of the recital, which elicited universal applause, "I would be willing and well-content to commence life again a beggar, if I could but deliver those beautiful lines with half the pathos you have just thrown into them!"

"Oh! Matty, Matty," interrupted Hook, "you have no idea how exquisitely ludicrous your enunciation would have made them—but you shall hear." Whereupon he commenced a display of mimicry, memory, and improvisation united; furnishing forth, verse by verse, a complete and perfect parody upon the poetry in question, and adopting the while an imitation of Mathews's expression, tone, and gesture, that, even to those familiar from boyhood with his power and his genius, appeared little less than miraculous. Mathews alone kept clear of ecstasies;—no man, perhaps, is qualified to appreciate a caricature of himself;—his deep reverence for the sentimental and pathetic being outraged by the profane burlesque, he maintained a moody silence, adding the finishing

touch to the comedy, by the look of indignation and contempt which he threw upon the performer. It was not, however, long before his good humour was thoroughly re-established, and he himself entertained the company with one or two of his admirable songs, calling at last upon Tom Hill, whose honest face was beaming with punch and pleasure, to contribute a specimen of his vocal abilities.

"Sing!" exclaimed Hill, "I sing! — come, come, Mat, that's too bad — you know I can't sing — never sung a song in my life, did I Hook? Pooh, pooh!"

"No," replied Theodore, "I can't say I ever heard you as yet — but sing you shall to night — by proxy." And again he burst forth, giving an extemporaneous versification of what were supposed to be Hill's adventures; raking up the most grotesque medley of anachronous events, and weaving them into a sort of life of his tre-centenarian friend, each stanza winding up with a chorus:—

"My name's Tommy Hill—
I'm jolly Tom Hill—
I'm fat Tommy Hill—I'm little Tom Hill;
I'm young Tommy Hill!—I'm *old* Tommy Hill!"

All were again convulsed with merriment, with the exception of Hill himself, who, nevertheless, struggled manfully to conceal his chagrin, muttering between his forced attempts at laughter:—"Excellent! — admirable! — clever dog! — d— him, — too bad — old friend. — Pooh, pooh! Hook."

For Tom Hill, Hook entertained a very sincere regard, as is evident from the tenour of a letter before

us, written on his being requested to furnish a memoir of his deceased friend. This he promised to do for "Bentley's Miscellany," but for want of time, or want of material, or for some other reason, he was compelled to leave the task in other hands. On the disposal of Hill's effects after his death, in 1840, Mr. Dubois had occasion to write to Hook, respecting some particulars connected with the sale of the books and pictures, at Evans's:—

"I told him," says that gentleman, "how the things went; amongst others, an excellent portrait in water-colours of Hook himself, by Bennett of Bath, which, as well as one of Jem Smith, fetched only a few shillings. In his letter in reply, I find the following passage; he had long perceived the vain results of notoriety. 'At the sale I bought my *juvenile portrait*, which to my own disparagement as regards popularity, I got for less than the cost of the frame and glass!'"

Notwithstanding the real affection he felt for him, Hook was sometimes led, as is the case with spoiled children, whether of larger or lesser growth, to trespass overmuch upon the good nature of his friend—almost worshipper—and to allow himself liberties which no degree of intimacy could justify. An instance of the kind occurred at Sydenham, when Hook, resenting the introduction of a comparative stranger to their saturnalia, chose to assume all sorts of extraordinary and offensive airs to the great discomfiture of his host, who, with the warmest desire to "see everybody comfortable," had not always perhaps, tact commensurate with his benevolence.

Having completely mystified the unwelcome guest during the hour or two before dinner, when that meal was served Mr. Hook was not to be found; search was made throughout the house, but in vain. The garden was scoured and a peep taken into the pond, but no Hook! The party at length sat down, and a servant soon after informed them that he had just discovered the lost one—in bed! Hook now thought fit to make his appearance, which he did in strange guise, with his long black hair plastered over his face, and his whole head and shoulders dripping with water. “Feeling a little fatigue,” he said, “he had retired to rest, and by way of thoroughly arousing himself had just taken a plunge in the water-butt;” at the same moment, and before he had time to partake of any of the good things before him, Mr. Hook’s carriage was announced; and merely observing that he had recollected an engagement to dine that day in town, he bowed and quitted the company.

It is not possible to estimate the degree of provocation that led to his extraordinary, and, as it stands, certainly inexcusable procedure, but he, of all men, was particularly exposed to annoyance from the intrusive curiosity of people, who seemed to consider they had been lured to the table under false pretences, if Mr. Hook declined “tumbling” for their amusement, and from the scarcely less offensive adulation of those who thought themselves bound to grin and giggle at every word, however common place, that fell from his lips.* Those who were present

* He has hinted at this sort of persecution which he had to endure in more than one of his novels:—“I happened to observe

will not readily forget how completely he succeeded in extinguishing the laughter of one of these indiscriminating admirers who frequently beset him in society.

In consequence of his arriving late, as was usual with him, Hook was placed next an individual who eagerly availed himself of an opportunity, never before enjoyed, of entering into direct communication with his eminent neighbour. The slightest symptoms of fun, on the part of the latter, were hailed with noisy approbation, and his puns were instantly repeated for the benefit of those at the upper end of the table with highly flattering comments, such as "Uncommonly good! capital! excellent, is it not?" &c. But not content with this busy retail business, Mr. — endeavoured to monopolise Hook's conversation altogether, constantly appealing to him,—asking his opinion on this subject, what he thought of that; and, in short, forcing himself upon the other's notice in a manner not less ill-bred than annoying. A mode of escape suggested itself. Hook, who was unwilling to disturb the company by any display of

(the first observation I had made too, and that in reply to a question of the big Bagswash) that I thought mustard went remarkably well with cold boiled beef, they all burst out into an immoderate fit of laughter; and the Doctor, who had been tutored into a belief in my superlative wit, exclaimed—"Oh! oh! that's too bad." which every fool cries out, either when he thinks a thing remarkably good, or does not comprehend it in the least."—*Gilbert Gurney*.

We remember witnessing the complete discomfiture of a wit, of no inferior order, by a message, politely delivered at a supper party by a little girl:—"If you please, Mr. B—, mamma sends her compliments, and would be much obliged if you would *begin to be funny!*"

that severity which he had at command, chose to adopt sedatives, replying courteously to every remark, and invariably concluding with: "*But, my dear sir, you don't drink.*"

Gratified by the attention he obtained, his new friend began to push forward his observations with greater confidence; they were all received with a polite smile, a nod of assent, and a motion towards the decanter:—

"Exactly! but I see, my dear sir, you *don't drink.*"

Glass after glass was filled and emptied by the unsuspecting Mr. —, at the suggestion of his companion, who redoubled his civilities as he observed an increasing profundity in the former's criticisms, a wilder luxuriance in his eloquence, and a more decided tendency towards imperfect articulation.

"You see, Mr. Hook, with regard to *Shaks-pere*, my opinion is—"

"I beg your pardon for the interruption, but permit me—your glass, I see, is empty. *My dear sir, you don't drink.*"

The *finale* was not long delayed; the enemy did his work, and stole away not only his victim's brain but his speech also. The effect of the potent spirit became visible about the same time upon another of those present; and it was not unamusing to observe the contrast afforded by the gentlemanly demeanour of the one and the coarse vulgarity of the other, both alike thrown off their guard by the insidious juice. "*In vino veritas,*" said Hook as the pair quitted the apartment,—Mr. — with an usually elegant bow and a creditable attempt at gravity, the

"bore," sick and helpless, and sprawling in the arms of the servants,—“you may now see the difference between the real and *spu*-rious gentleman.”

It was shortly after his location at Somers-town that Mr. Hook renewed his acquaintance with Mr. Wilson Croker, in whose society no small portion of his time was spent, both at the Admiralty and at the latter's villa at Moulsey. He was also occasionally a visitor at General Phipps's, (a relation of his mother's,) in Harley Street, where he met and speedily became intimate with the late Speaker, Lord Canterbury. They were afterwards seen a great deal together, and the pair strolling arm in arm down St. James's Street, forms the subject of one—not the most happy—of the HB sketches.* With these exceptions, for a long period his position as a public defaulter together with the *res angustæ domi*, confined him to the narrow and comparatively inexpensive circle of his old literary and theatrical associates.

After a dreary and injurious confinement of eight months' duration in the Shire Lane sponging-house, and a subsequent removal to a lodging within the rules of the King's Bench, in Temple Place (where he lived about a year, enjoying, although subject to many galling restrictions, comparative liberty), he was, as has been stated, finally discharged from custody in May, 1825. He engaged immediately a comfortable house at Putney, and established himself in a style sufficiently complete and well appointed, but by

* A slight obliquity of vision for which his lordship was remarkable suggested the title—a passable adaptation of Theodore's own joke—"Hook and *Eye*"

no means incommensurate with the income of which he was now in the receipt.

Hook had returned to England penniless, but he brought with him stores, the result of increased knowledge of the world and of an observation active under every vicissitude of fortune, which with his singular facility in composition were readily reducible to current coin.* Accordingly, notwithstanding the harassing and protracted business at the Audit-office, he found time to strike off a succession of papers and pamphlets, the proceeds of which for some months formed his sole income. These for obvious reasons were published anonymously, and from this fact, and that of their being for the most part mere hits at the politics of the day, they have, with scarcely an exception, been swept from the face of the literary globe, and are only to be met with in the museums of such curious collectors as Tom Hill and the like.

One of these *jeux d'esprit*, entitled "*Tentamen*; or an Essay towards the History of Whittington, some time Lord Mayor of London, by Dr. Vicesimus Blenkinsop," produced no little sensation, and ran rapidly through two or three editions. Hook, however, we believe, was not suspected to be the author. This *opusculum* which is now extremely rare, and a copy of which would fetch quadruple its original price, was an

* This facility was, however, in a great measure the result of application; he used to compare his progress in composition to that of the parliamentary oratory of Mr. Perceval; the latter, it will be remembered, set out as a very timid and indifferent speaker, but ended in becoming one of the best debaters in the House.

attack, conducted in a strain of elaborate irony, equal to the happiest efforts of Martinus Scriblerus, upon the worthy Alderman Wood, (a portrait of whom adorned the title-page,) and his royal *protégée*. It served to introduce, among other things, "Ann exceedinge, exacte, and excellent good Ballade," existing in the British Museum (*Messalina* 2), which, for the benefit of those who might despair of finding the original in so multitudinous a class, we transcribe :

" Yee cytyzens of Lundun tounē,
Ande wyves so faire and fatte,
Beholde a gūeste of high renoune !
Grete Whyttingtone hys Catte !

" Ye kynge hathe ynn hys toure off state
Beares, lyones, and alle thatte ;
But hee hathe notte a beste soe grate
Ass Whyttingtone hys Catte !

" This Catte dothe notte a catte appear,
Beeynge toe bigge forre thatte ;
But herre attendants all doe weare
Some tokyn off a Catte !

" Ye one hathe whyskerres thicke as burrs,
Moste comelye toe looke atte ;
Anoder weares a gown of furrs,
Ye lyverye off ye Catte !

" She dothe not creepe along ye floores,
But standes or else lyes flatte ;
Whyles they must gambole onne all fours
Whoe wyshe to please ye Catte !

“ A conynge monkeye off ye lande,
Ass bye ye fyre he satte,
Toe pick hys nuts oute, used ye hande
Off Whyttingtone hys Catte !

“ But Whyttingtone discovered playne
Whatte this rude ape was atte,
Whoe failedde thus hys nuttes toe gayne,
And only synged ye Catte !

“ Thenne Whyttingtone ynn gorgeous state,
Syttynge wythoute his hatte,
Broughte toe hys house atte Grovner-gate
Thys moste illustrious Catte !

“ Shee is soe graciouse and soe tame,
Alle menne may strooke and patte ;
But it is sayde norre mayde norre dame
Have dared toe see thatte Catte !

“ Fulle hugelye gladde she seemeth whenne
They brynge herre a grete ratte ;
But styll moe gladde atte katchynge menne
Ys Whyttingtone hys Catte !

“ A catte, they saye, maye watche a kynge,
Ye apotheme is patte ;
Ye converse is a differente thyng :
Noe kynge may watche thys Catte !

“ Thenne take each manne hys scarlate gounne,
And eke hys velvette hatte,
And humblye wellcome ynto tounne
Grete Whyttingtone hys Catte.”

The cat is clearly demonstrated in the inquiry that follows (and which, by the way, shews more learning

than Hook commonly obtained credit for) to have been no other than an enchantress, who is induced to visit England under the protection of Whyttingtone, than whom never was mayor more worthy or more modest withal.

“*Serche Englonde round, nape all the erthe,
 Itte mychtelie woult trouble you,
 To finde a manne so ryche in worthe
 As honeste Mathewe W.*
 “*He’s notte the manne to doe you wronge,
 For wythe false speeches trouble you,
 Whyle beef grows fatte, and beer grows strong,
 Long lyfe to Mathewe W.*”

The speculation, however, does not turn out satisfactorily, for either party. The cat pines for sunnier climes, regrets the seraglio at Algiers, where she had been received with so much distinction, and where, according to the *vates sacer*, she

“*Passed herre tyme amydst ye thronge,
 As happie as ye daye was longe,*”

while honest Matthew on his part gets heartily sick of the bargain, and contrives to shuffle her off his hands.

In the spring of this year (1820), Hook, with the assistance of his old friend, Daniel Terry, started a small periodical.* It was published, and we believe suggested by Mr. Miller, who had recently engaged extensive premises in—what was then expected to

* One article, “An Ode to Mercury,” a curious specimen of the class called “Rigmarole,” was contributed by Mr. James Smith.

prove a great mart for the lighter description of literature—a sort of occidental “Row,”—the Burlington Arcade. Hence the name of the first-born, “The Arcadian,” but which, to say the truth, had little of the pastoral in its composition, if we except a certain ballad of melodious rhythm addressed to Lady H—d, and commencing:

“Listen, lady, to my measures,
While they softly, gently flow,
While I sing the harmless pleasures
Of the classic, silver Po,” &c.

Like its predecessor, “Tentamen,” “The Arcadian” has long since disappeared from the shelves of “the trade.” We have to thank Mr. Miller for a sight of one of the few copies in existence, and for his permission to quote, which, under the circumstances we shall do liberally, from its pages.

It has been proved to the entire satisfaction of various doctors, irrefragable, seraphic, and sublime, that all human events fall out in an established cycle, so as to be repeated with the nicest exactness, every six thousand and some odd hundreds of years; and it may, perhaps, be admitted by way of corollary, that there are certain minor revolutions in that vast and complicated system, by which a particular crisis may be at shorter intervals re-produced with a marvellous similarity of circumstance and effect. Who, for example, would not surmise that the Arcadian was not addressing in the following lines some great “Moral Force Demonstrator” of 1848; as they would equally well have applied, some forty years before, to the “pe-

tioners" of '80? They form part of a letter supposed to be written by "Colonel D—d, who (with a select party of his friends), was executed for high treason, on the top of the prison in Horsemonger Lane," to an agitating friend, a certain clamourer for Radical Reform, and an uncompromising stickler for the "MAJESTY OF MUD." The worthy gentleman alluded to, seems not to have despised the hint thus conveyed to him:—

" All that I ask and warn you from the tomb
 To DO and NOT TO DO, in days to come,
 Is to be fair with those who think you just,
 And place in you a most important trust ;
 Not lead them on by specious argument,
 Or speeches of Reform in Parliament,
 To fancy THAT the object of their aim.
 Speak boldly out, and call it by its name :
 Say that the object is to trample down
 The Laws, Religion, and the Monarch's Crown ;
 To overturn the happy Constitution,
 And plunge the country into Revolution !
 Tell them all this—and thus your duty do ;
 Speak from your conscience—and you 'll say 'tis true.
 The sneaking terms in which they cloak the thing
 Are false : they say that they respect their King,
 And style him gracious—sweet returns for grace,
 To cast their filthy insults in his face ;
 Petitions you would call them—not unlike
 The thief's petition when prepared to strike :
 But what respect can factions owe the throne,
 Who, lost to shame, their Saviour can disown ?
 'Tis true C—e the miscreant who was tried
 The Holy Word unblushingly denied,
 And quoted Scripture only to deride.

I have been in Newgate keep,
 Doomed to dine, to drink, and sleep,
 Side by side with rogue and sweep,
 In dungeon dark and clammy.*

“What took you to Newgate keep,
 My boy Cammy?
 What took you to Newgate keep,
 My boy Cammy?
 I did once my goose-quill take,
 To shew a Whig a small mistake.
 Did you do ’t for freedom’s sake?
 Freedom’s my eye and Tammy!

“What then did you do it for,
 My boy Cammy?
 What then did you do it for,
 My boy Cammy?
 Because I thought if I were sent
 To jail, for libelling Parliament,
 I might chance to circumvent
 Next election, Lamby.†

“How would that throw out George Lamb,
 My boy Cammy?
 How would that throw out George Lamb,
 My boy Cammy?

* This is a poetical licence; for by the paternal solicitude of Sir Francis B——, little Cammy was rescued from the dreadful contamination. It was not unamusing to see the worthy baronet start with horror at the idea of sending a *gentleman*, like his friend, to a nasty, damp, filthy prison. We thought the laws were to know no distinctions, particularly the laws of the Radicals.—*Arcadian*.

† At a meeting at a tavern in the Strand, Hunt observed that Mr. H——’s Newgate manœuvre “savoured a little of an election trick.”—*Ibid*.

Because, with tag, rag, and bobtail,
 Nothing does but going to jail ;
 We have seldom found it fail ;

Voyez vous, mon ami !

“ How do you make *that* out,
 My boy Cammy ?
 How do you make *that* out,
 My boy Cammy ?
 See what all the rest have done—
 Abbott, Burdett, Waddington,
 Blandford, Hunt, and Wat—son,
 And now, like them, here am I !

“ Did the Speaker talk to you,
 My boy Cammy ?
 Did the Speaker talk to you,
 My boy Cammy ?
 No ;—my visit to Papa
 Wrecked my prospects of *éclat* ;
 I was never at the bar,
 Where I thought they’d ha’ me.

“ Why, then, ’tis a stupid job,
 My boy Cammy.
 Why, then, ’tis a stupid job,
 My boy Cammy.
 No ;—because when I come out
 They ’ll have a car, without a doubt,
 And, in triumph, all about,
 The biped beasts will draw me.

“ You ’ve mistaken quite your game,
 My boy Cammy.
 You ’ve mistaken quite your game,
 My boy Cammy.

Of fulsome stuff, like that, we're sick,
 Besides, we all see through the trick ;
 Before we drag, we'll see you 'kick'
 Before your prison, d—mme !”

The same contemptuous tone, in treating of theatricals, is observable both in the “Bull” and its tiny predecessor. The latter, by the way, contains a most exquisite *critique*, a perfect masterpiece of irony, upon the “first appearance” of a certain young lady ; but who would have expected to find Theodore Hook, the popular dramatist, in the thirty-second year of his age, thus writing of the stage and its attractions ?—

“With shop-lads, junior clerks to bankers and attorneys, underlings of Somerset House, and bettermost apprentices, the theatre is everything. Fitted out for the play with false collars, black neckcloths, and cheap great coats, with hanging capes (sure indications of dirty shirts and shabby clothes), these aspiring youths look upon Covent Garden and Drury Lane as objects of more importance than the Houses of Parliament, and speak of Fawcett and Harley, Oxberry and Russel, as men of the world would of a lord-chancellor or a prime minister, and descant upon the merits of authors (*as they call the wretched farce-writers of the day*), whose names are never wafted farther over the cab-bages of Covent Garden than the portico of the church, with the same tone of recognition which scholars and gentlemen would use in discussing the merits of a Scott or a Campbell, and ask each other—‘Have you seen Moncrieffe’s play ?’ ‘Have you read Parry’s farce ?’ ‘Do you know Dr. M——n ?’ ‘What a clever fellow Soane is !’ Then cries one—‘I am asked out, on Sunday, to dine where Jeffries does.’ ‘And I,’ exclaims a second, ‘met Winston at a tea-

party, in Swallow-street, on Friday.' 'And I,' roars a third, 'smoked a pipe with Kean, at the Coal-hole,' or wherever it might chance to have been."—*Arcadian*, p. 78.

Among others who fell under the lash of the redoubtable *Rodney Birch*, may be numbered one *Mr. Little*, whose whiggery and wickedness were, of course, highly offensive in the nostrils of the loyal *Arcadian*. We have accordingly, among the "dead letters," one—

"From the late lamented Miss E—— P——, who died, in the seventeenth year of her age, at Mrs. ——'s boarding-school, at Chelsea, in consequence of perpetually reading "Little's Poems," which had been incautiously lent her by one of the housemaids.

"TO T——S M——RE, ESQ.

"Oh, least of my loves ! how I 've linger'd and listen'd,
While sweetly I 've heard your soft melodies flow ;
At your stories of love, how my eye-balls have glisten'd,
How charmingly warm have I felt my cheek glow !

"When I read all those things about Rosa and Fanny,
How over each page did I ponder and pore,
And had thought them too few, had there been twice as
many,
For girls who read *Little*, will languish for *More* !

"When I praised you at home, mamma call'd me stupid,
And brother, the lawyer, said, 'What, like *that* thing ?'

* * * * *

"Yet still did I love you—and oh, for that power,
 That magical power of wild flowing song;
 How thrilling, how melting, in banquet or bower,
 How charming, how warming, how pleasant, how
 wrong!

"One peak of Parnassus is held by Apollo,
 The other by Bacchus, in glory divine,
 From which, my dear Tommy, it justly should follow,
 That warblers like you should be fond of their wine.

"But your little tiplings have none of the merits,
 Which in fair honest claret they say people see;
 You suck the old *Hollands*, unwholesome, bad spirits,
 Which with sound constitutions can never agree.

"But I must conclude, and concluding implore ye,
 In pity to virtue in woman or man,
 Not to write as you do; change the tone of your story;
 Be decent and loyal—at least if you can.

"I remember a fable, I think 'tis in *Æsop*,
 Where a trumpeter, taken in war by a king,
 Was hang'd, by his order, on some neighb'ring trees up,
 Which seem'd to the *Staff* an extraord'nary thing.

"But the king said, 'Although the man wasn't to fight
 meant,
 And had only to sound on his trumpet the call,
 He deserv'd to be hang'd for his heartless incitement,
 Himself in the fray doing nothing at all.'

"Though I was your victim, and death seal'd my eyes, too,
 I'll not add a word which can give you distress;
 If you don't see, at once, whom the fable applies to,
 I'm your humble, dear Tommy, and leave you to guess."

Full of fun and spirit as the little magazine was,
 VOL. I. K

it came to an untimely end; but two numbers ever made their appearance. Such was the difficulty which the publisher experienced in making up the second, owing to Hook's listlessness, or more probably pre-occupation, that he declined venturing on a third. Once more, then, notwithstanding his growing aversion from theatricals, Hook was induced to have recourse to the drama; and the favourite "stock-piece," "Exchange no Robbery" (written for, and probably at the instigation of his literary *collaborateur*, Terry,) was the result of his labours. Whatever objections existed to the appearance of his name in connection with previous works, they were not a little heightened by the equivocal title of this. It was produced, therefore, under the pseudonym of Richard Jones. The copyright brought him in 60*l*.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ORIGIN AND OBJECT OF THE "JOHN BULL."—THE REAL PROJECTORS.—THE DAY OF PUBLICATION.—UNEXPECTED DEMAND.—"HUNTING THE HARE."—"THE PROPHECY."—CURIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE CONNECTED WITH THE PUBLICATION OF AN ALLEGED LIBEL AGAINST LADY ———.—PROSECUTIONS.—MESSRS. WEAVER, SHACKELL, AND OTHERS SUMMONED TO THE BAR OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.—FINE AND IMPRISONMENT.—MR. HOOK'S DISCLAIMER.

THE most important event with which the name of Theodore Hook stands connected, is, without question, the establishment of the "John Bull" newspaper, at the close of 1820. Of late years journals have not been wanting in which the "liberty of the press" has been pushed to the utmost limit permitted by a too indulgent law, and which have been brought to exercise more or less influence over particular classes of society; but the universal, instantaneous, and appreciable effect produced on the great political movements of the day by the appearance of "Bull," is probably without a parallel in the history of periodical literature.

The paper set out with one specific object, the extinction of the Brandenburg House party, and to accomplish this, Hook's varied talents, his wit and humour—his sarcasm and bitterness—his keenness of argument, fiery zeal, and unscrupulous daring were

all brought to bear with concentrated energy upon the ranks of the opposition. Any man reckless of legal consequences, or beyond their reach, familiar with the current scandal of the day, and having so powerful an engine as a public paper at his disposal, may inflict a vast amount of injury upon his adversaries; but to these conditions, in the present case, may be added powers, if not of the very highest order, doubtless the best adapted to the purpose, sources of information peculiar and inexplicable, a singleness of purpose and firm conviction of its justice that combined to render "Bull" the most formidable antagonist that had as yet entered the lists against the Queen.

The Whig wits, who, with the most unblushing effrontery, had launched their satire against the monarch and his private friends were completely taken aback by so unlooked for an application of the *lex talionis*. The foe was felt, not seen—impervious to retorts, the humble names put forth could not supply even a peg whereupon to hang an epigram; while it was obvious that prosecutions for libel, and denunciations of personality, must come with the least possible grace from the patrons of the "Two-penny Post Bag" and "The Fudge Family:" to say nothing of the "Gorgons," "Medusas," "Republicans," and the infamous caricatures with which the town was deluged and disgraced—that witty, wicked, progeny of treason—

"Begot by brilliant heads on worthless hearts,
Like things that quicken after Nilus' flood,
The venom'd birth of sunshine and of mud."

Whatever may be thought of the fierceness of invective and the overwhelming ridicule, the torrents of splendid abuse with which the Queen and her partizans were assailed—and nothing, to our mind, could render such reprisals justifiable—it must nevertheless be remembered, that, at all events, “Bull” was not the aggressor. War to the knife had been proclaimed, and waged, too, on the one side, with ruthless malignity; and although society had grave cause of offence in the audacious violation of the decencies of controversy that resulted, the Liberals and their allies were but writhing under a chastisement they had themselves provoked.

Hook certainly had no personal malice to gratify; his shafts struck home, it must be admitted, but were urged for the most part against those who entered of their own accord into the lists: nor was private character invaded, with a few deeply to be regretted cases of exception, save when that private character was by its owner dragged forth into political life, and made to challenge, as it were, the scrutiny of the public.

Much has been said, insinuated, and conjectured respecting the early history of the “John Bull;” a pleasant mystery has long hung over its birth and nurture. *Junius* himself scarce excited more ingenious speculation, or called forth more active endeavours to drag to light the intangible “*Nominis Umbra*.” To individuals the most opposed in character and in politics have been ascribed the editorial honours; Whigs as well as Tories were lauded and denounced; while a very general opinion obtained, that, let who

might, wield the pen, the design could but have originated in what, by a polite adumbration, is termed "a certain quarter," whence also, it was declared, the sinews of war must have been supplied. It has been intimated, even lately, that Sir Walter Scott, whose penetrating eye detected the future hero in Sir Arthur Wellesley, pointed out to a personal friend of George IV., Mr. Theodore Hook as a fit and proper person to wake the thunder, and direct the storm that were to blast the budding hopes of Radicalism.

This supposition would certainly seem to derive additional weight from the fact of Sir Walter's intimacy with one of the real projectors, Daniel Terry. We have, however, the best grounds for believing, that by Hook himself and his old literary ally, *Arcades ambo*, the rough design was originally struck out; that it was neither prompted by any "illustrious personage," nor promoted, in the first instance at all events, by pecuniary assistance from any extrinsic source whatever. A suspicion, perhaps, may be admitted, that the party whose interests were so materially advanced by the new paper, did not prove altogether unmindful of the obligation. But, whether any thing in the shape of an *honorarium* was, or was not, subsequently tendered to the proprietors, it is not in our power to state.

With respect to the circumstances which gave rise to the undertaking, it will be remembered that, on the demise of George III., arrangements were required to be entered into for the maintenance of the Queen-Consort, at that time travelling on the continent. An offer was in consequence submitted to her Ma-

jesty, on the part of the King, of continuing her former allowance of 50,000*l.* per annum, conditionally on her engaging to remain abroad, and to resign all claim to the regal style and title; while at the same time, it was pretty broadly hinted, that, should she venture to return to England, proceedings would forthwith be commenced against her in Parliament. The Queen, however, who, to do her justice, was far from deficient in spirit, spurned alike at the threat and the proposal, and, crossing the channel, boldly hastened to confront her accusers.

The fate of the Bill of Pains and Penalties, abandoned by ministers in consequence of the reduced majority on the third reading, is well known. Then came all the unmitigated extravagancies of a popular triumph; public meetings, addresses, illuminations, squibs, bon-fires, and breaking of windows, together with such other ebullitions of gaiety, as his majesty the mob when tickled, delighteth to indulge in.

Every attempt meanwhile was being made by the more sober of the party to throw an air of respectability round the new court established at Brandenburg House. Men, of course, were not found wanting to rally round anything that had the form and semblance of a throne; the difficulty was with their ladies. The women of this country have unfortunately a rough and stubborn virtue about them—an awkward, old-fashioned code of proprieties, very ridiculous, doubtless, in the eyes of our more polite neighbours, but not altogether without its advantages, which render it no easy matter to gain their counte-

nance for one whose fair fame has been sullied even by suspicion. Still fashion and example may do much, and the Whig aristocracy began to waver, while every convert, of whatever rank or character, was paraded in the Liberal prints as a fresh witness in favour of calumniated innocence, and forced as an authority upon the notice of the public. Such a course was evidently obnoxious to one species of re-tort. An *exposée* of the pretensions upon which the females, who thus made themselves, or permitted themselves to be made dangerously conspicuous, rested their own claims to consideration and respect. Hook saw the blots that might be hit, and immediately conceived the plan of starting a periodical by way of counterblast to the puffatory notifications in the "Times," "Chronicle," &c., and in which a thorough sifting of, and investigation into the life and position of every individual who appeared in the Queen's society should be published, and every flaw in the reputation, every weak point in the family history of her adherents duly brought to light.

Few persons we should suppose at this day, even of those who retain a lively recollection of the fury with which party-spirit was then raging, will be inclined to justify the revelations to which the adoption of this mode of attack inevitably led; all that can be urged in extenuation is, as we have said, the rancour and recklessness with which characters even more sacred, and involving greater public interest, were traduced by writers on the other side; among whom might be numbered not only the herd of professional and insignificant libellers, but not a

few of a far higher and more responsible class—men of rank and eminence.

Full of their new scheme, which was among other results to open an *Eldorado* to all concerned, off started Hook and his *fidus Achates* to find a “proprietor.” Application was naturally made to their old friend Miller, the publisher of their former venture; all losses were to be repaired and a fortune made out of hand by the unquestionable success of the present speculation, but that gentleman, luckily perhaps for himself, happened to entertain strong opinions upon the subject of “fine and imprisonment!” With him all arguments proved, as Hook said, *Newgate-ory*; he declined, and the subject was then, or perhaps had been simultaneously, opened to Mr. Shackell, the printer of various loyal and popular works, “Tentamen” among the rest.

Hook was all eagerness for a magazine—always a pet scheme—upon the model of “Blackwood,” a revival in short, in a more extensive form and with a more definite object, of the defunct “Arcadian.” Wiser counsels prevailed, and at Mr. Shackell’s suggestion, the plan of a weekly newspaper was adopted as being better adapted for general circulation, and affording a more available medium for the exposure of the tricks and devices of the enemy, which would have answered their purpose and been forgotten, long before the heavy artillery of a monthly periodical could have been directed against them. A demur next arose as to the title; “John Bull” was mentioned at once, and appeared the very thing, but unfortunately it had been in a measure pre-engaged by Elliston, who to-

gether with Hook, had actually entertained the idea some considerable time before, of establishing a paper under that name. Minor considerations of delicacy gave way, and it was finally determined that a weekly journal, to be called the "John Bull," should be published every Saturday afternoon in time for that day's post;—the property was to be divided into two equal parts, and the profits shared by Hook and Mr. Shackell, the former engaging to produce the literary *materiel*, the latter to supply the necessary funds, undertake the commercial management, and stand all hazards pecuniary and otherwise.

The preliminary arrangements were soon concluded; a nominal editor was appointed at a small weekly salary, who was to occupy his leisure by correcting the press, and to act as a sort of legal lightning conductor to the concern; but who, of course, knew as little of the actual writers as his meteorological type of the drawing-room denizens who might be dependent on it for security. A printer and publisher was easily found among the subordinates of Mr. Shackell's establishment;—and, in short, every disposition was made to ensure the real agents from discovery, a condition essential to the success and even existence of the paper. As regards Hook, the secret was only partially, and for a time preserved. To other individuals, though the tongues of men were busy with the names of not a few, the connection was never brought home; indeed, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the suspected were purely innocent; but nevertheless Hook, notwithstanding what has been asserted to the contrary, was far from being

left entirely to his own resources. The song for example in the very first number, concluding with the stanza, the only one we can venture to repeat—

“ In short, each Whig Lord is an ass
 -emblage of all merit ;
 And, to reward their virtuous lives,
 May all their daughters and their wives
 The Queen’s good taste inherit,”

was by another hand, or, at all events, by another head, these extraneous contributions being, for the most part, delivered orally,—a fact which would enable the author to declare with scrupulous accuracy, that he had never *written* a line for the “ John Bull.” Nor, again, can there be any doubt but that the design which must have been communicated to certain influential members of the Tory party, probably to Royalty itself, was received with tacit approbation, if not with assurances of active support.

Meanwhile the important day of publication arrived ; a brief announcement, couched in terms sufficiently mysterious, had been for some weeks circulating among “ the trade,” but without attracting any extraordinary attention. And now, on the eventful evening, December 16, 1820, let Hook and his coadjutor be imagined, seated in a small parlour, situated in a silent, traffickless spot enough, though within a hundred yards of the busiest thoroughfare in London, denominated Gough Square ; torn newspapers, sheets of “ copy,” “ slips,” “ revises ” fresh, or rather foul from the printer’s hand, with all the many *désagremens* of an editor’s room, scattered in confusion around—post hour drawing on—Hook himself fretting, fuming,

fancying every thing wrong, storming, apologizing, starting from his chair, pacing the apartment, stopping ever and anon to gulp down huge draughts of a suspicious-looking sedative, and, in the whirl and agony of excitement, uttering as many good things as would have supported his paper for a month—at length, unable to endure suspense, seizing brush and scissors, and by pasting the *disjecta membra*, the corrected “proofs” upon a blank sheet, endeavouring to frame a sort of Frankenstein similitude of the coming stranger—all eagerness, anxiety, apprehension—when lo! just in time to save that night’s mail, the reeking devilet enters, bending beneath the first impression!

Within a few hours, the town was in a blaze, orders arrived from every quarter, and the office was beset with applicants! Preparations for the distribution of the paper must have been made by its patrons, to an extent unsuspected by the proprietors themselves, for so moderate had been the anticipations held as to the probable demand, that no more than 750 stamps had been procured: hundreds of copies were, in consequence struck off upon unstamped paper, and issued in the course of that and the following day, the publisher making the proper affidavit, and paying the extra duty on the Monday.

Its success was complete and unexampled; at the sixth week the sale had reached ten thousand, the first five numbers were reprinted more than once, and the first and second actually kept in stereotype.

According to the original design, all those ladies whose names appeared on the pages—“John” would say *page*, hinting that it was never turned,—of the

visitors book at Brandenburg House, were enumerated, with some unpalatable fact or insinuation appended to each. It was, as has been observed, one of Hook's favourite axioms, constantly occurring in his novels, that there exists some weak point, some secret cancer in every family — he had his own — the lightest touch on which is torture. "Upon that hint he spake." Those of the clergy, also, were duly chronicled, who took upon themselves to introduce the Queen's name in the Liturgy, a mark of attention particularly inconvenient to certain peace-loving pluralists, who were in the habit of praying very heartily for the Queen, where her cause was popular, but who adhered strictly to the Rubric where the 'Squire happened to be Tory, or the parish officers intolerant. Of the celebrated songs, "Bull's" "Queen of Weapons" one of the earliest, and perhaps the best, was on the subject of the Addresses already referred to — it runs merrily enough, to the old tune of —

HUNTING THE HARE.

"Would you hear of the triumph of purity ?

Would you share in the joy of the Queen ?

List to my song, and, in perfect security,

Witness a *row* where you durst not have been :

All kinds of addresses,

From collars of S.S.,

To venders of cresses,

Came up like a fair ;

And all through September,

October, November,

And down to December,

They hunted this Hare !

* * * *

“ Bold, yet half-blushing, the gay Lady Jersey
 Drove up to the entrance, but halted outside,
 While Sefton’s fair tribe, from the banks of the Mersey,
 Who promised to keep her in countenance, shyed.
 But this never hinders
 The sham Lady L——,
 Who stoutly goes in-doors—
 Old Rush does the same ;
 Great scorn of all such is !
 But Bedford’s brave Duchess,
 To get in her clutches,
 Delighted the dame.

* * * *

“ Damsels of Marybone, decked out in articles
 Borrowed of brokers, for shillings and pence ;
 The eye of vulgarity anything smart tickles ;
 Drabs love a ride at another’s expense ;
 So swarming like loaches,
 In ten hackney-coaches,
 They make their approaches,
 And pull at the bell ;
 And then they flaunt brave in,
 Preceded by Craven,
 And, clean and new shaven,
 Topographical Gell.

“ Next came a motley assemblage of what I call
 Mummers and mountebanks, wildly arrayed,
 Hodmen and coal-heavers, landsmen and nautical,
 Tag, rag, and bobtail, a strange masquerade ;

A rout of sham sailors,
 Escaped from their jailors,
 As *sea-bred* as *tailors*,
 In Shropshire or Wilts.
 But mark Oldi's smile and hers,
 Greeting, as Highlanders,
 Half a score Mile-enders,
 Shiv'ring in kilts !

" Noel and Moore are the pink of her quality,
 Judge what must be the more mean partizans !
 What sweepings of kennels, what scums of rascality,
 Hir'd and attir'd to enact artisans ;
 Sham painters, and stainers,
 Smiths, coopers, cordwainers,
 And glaziers, chief gainers
 In such a turmoil,
 Though chandlers and joiners,
 And forgers and coiners,
 And pocket-purloiners,
 All share in the spoil.

" Verdant green-grocers, all mounted on jackasses
 (Lately called *Guildfords*, in honour of Fred),
 Sweet nymphs of Billingsgate, tipsy as Bacchusses,
 Roll'd in, like porpoises, heels over head.
 And, the better to charm her,
 Three tinkers in armour,
 All hired by Harmer,
 Brave Thistlewood's friend ;
 Those stout men of metal,
 Who think they can settle,
 The state, if a kettle
 They 're able to mend.

“Next come the presents. Whitechapel (where Jews
bury)

Sends needles to hem Dr. Fellowes’s lawn ;
Cracknells from Cowes—sweet sinnels from Shrews-
bury—

Rump-steaks from Dublin—and collars of brawn !

A pig—and a blanket—

A sturgeon from Stangate—

The donors all thank-ed

By Royal desire,

Old Parr gave his benison,

To Parkins’s venison,

But the pamphlet of Tennyson

He threw in the fire.

* * * * *

“And now, ere I send off my song to the town-sellers

(‘Twill fetch rather more than the speeches of Hume),

We ’ll give one huzza to her pure privy-councillors,

Lushington, Williams, Wilde, Denman, and

Brougham ;

With Vizard, and Cobbett,

And Hunt who would mob it,

And Cam who would job it,

As Dad did before,

With Waithman, the prate man,

And Pearson, the *plate*-man,

And Matthew the great man,

Who found us the *Hare*.”

In the same number there occurs also the following
lines, remarkable for the touching hint to the author,
with which they were republished in 1832.

THE PROPHECY.

" I care not a l——
 For J—— C—— H——e ;
 He may fume and may fret,
 And may toady Burdett,
 He may think himself witty,
 Cut a dash in the city,
 Vent vulgar abuse,
 Or hiss like a goose ;
 To St. Paul's he may ride,
 With a sword by his side ;
 Or may follow the queen,
 Like a Jack on the green ;
 But, do what he will,
 He 's a little man still ;
 He 'll be laughed at and scouted,
 Be frump'd, and be flouted ;
 Ignoble his fate,
 Be it early or late,
 He will live in a splutter,
 And die in a gutter."

" When the author of these lines re-reads them to-day, and recollects that he really wrote them, we should think that he must have some compunctious visitings. As far as we are concerned, he is safe ; but surely he cannot hide himself from *Himself* ! "

Hook was as good as his word—he never permitted the writer's name to transpire.

Another of these extraneous contributions, though in this case none connected with the paper ever knew to whom they were indebted, was the famous " Mi-

chael's Dinner." The circumstances which gave rise to this *jeu d'esprit* were as follows. A notice for reform having been ushered in, under the auspices of Mr. Lambton, with more pomp and ceremony than usual; preparatory assemblies having been held, and their proceedings duly reported and commented on by the Whig journals, a formidable band of partizans, all ready to die for their country, came down to the House; the debate began; but owing to the crowds of patriots, who were impatient to express their opinions on so soul-stirring a subject, an adjournment was rendered necessary. On the following day, the hostile ranks met in battle array; but alas! *ἄι, ἄι, τυφλοὶ ἡγεμόνες*, the Agamemnon, the Achilles, not sufficiently swift as to the feet,—the mover, the seconder of the motion, with a band of staunch adherents, a little miscalculating the probable duration of the preliminary skirmish, were absent from their posts, refreshing themselves, it was hinted, for the renewal of the fight, with soup *à la Reine* and Barnes's claret beneath the hospitable roof of Mr. Michael Angelo Taylor.

Seeing the deserted ranks of the enemy, the Tories made a grand push, forced on a division, and when Mr. Lambton, "preceded by his groans, and followed by Mr. Brougham," rushed indignantly into the House, there was nothing left him but to bewail the premature fate of his new-born babe, and to relieve his labouring breast by venting dire anathemas on those who had presumed to hail his appearance with symptoms of irreverend mirth. Canning, according to the tactics of his party, had spoken but a few sentences, and it is not impossible that his repressed eloquence

might subsequently have broken out in the following pæan.*

MICHAEL'S DINNER; OR, STAUNCH FRIENDS
TO REFORM.

TUNE—*Soger Laddie*.

“Fair Reform, celestial maid,
Hope of Britons—hope of Britons!
Calls her followers to her aid,
She has fit ones—she has fit ones!
They would brave, in danger's day,
Death to win her—death to win her;
If they met not, by the way,
Michael's dinner—Michael's dinner.

“Lambton leads the patriot van;
Noble fellow—generous fellow!
Quite the dandy of the clan,
Rather yellow—rather yellow;
Of fair Liberty he tells
Tales bewitching—tales bewitching,
But they vanish, when he smells
Michael's kitchen—Michael's kitchen.

“Lawyer Brougham is next in rank;
Prates like Babel—prates like Babel;
He has never eat or drank
At Brib'ry's table—Brib'ry's table;
What, then, now can stop his mouth,
In this hot age—in this hot age?
'Tis, *if he would tell the truth*,
Michael's potage—Michael's potage.

* It was placed in the publisher's hands by a ticket-porter of the Temple—the luckless paragraph on Mr. Grey Bennett, that brought with it fine and imprisonment, was forwarded through the same medium, and not written by any one connected with the paper.

* * * *

“Where was, on that famous night,
 Hume, the surgeon—Hume the surgeon?
 Who pretends to set us right
 By constant purging—constant purging.
 No division yet expecting,
 Fond of work, he—fond of work, he
 At the moment was *dissecting*
 Michael’s turkey—Michael’s turkey.

“F——n his place may choose
 In the bevy—in the bevy;
 He’s the real TAYLOR’s *goose*,
 Hot and heavy—hot and heavy;
 He’d outdo, with sword and flame,
 Senna-cherib—Senna-cherib;
 What, that evening, made him tame?
 Michael’s spare-rib—Michael’s spare-rib.

“Thus the social round they form,
 In Privy Gardens—Privy-Gardens;
 And they care about Reform
 Not three-farthings—not three-farthings.
 To yawn and vote, let *others* stay
 Who can bear it—who can bear it,
 They much wiser drink away
 Michael’s claret—Michael’s claret.

“While ye thus, in claret, sirs,
 Lose your reason—lose your reason,
 England will recover hers
 Lost last season—lost last season.
 Faction’s mobs, sedition’s hordes
 Must grow thinner—must grow thinner,
 When plain common sense records
 Michael’s dinner—Michael’s dinner!”

Early in his career, there occurred a somewhat remarkable circumstance connected with one of the prosecutions which the temerity of "Bull" drew upon his representatives. A letter arrived at the office, by post, containing a bank note for 20*l.*, and recommending that a Monday edition of the paper should be issued, and forwarded to the inns of the principal towns throughout the kingdom, the expense of which would be partially covered by the enclosed subscription. The hint was adopted, and the next number, unhappily charged with severe reflections upon the memory of a female member of a noble family, was sent off to the various posting-houses mentioned in the Road-book. In due course, a copy was directed to the "Red Lion," Wolverhampton, in the neighbourhood of which, the widower of the lady in question resided. Steps were immediately taken to avenge the affront, rendered, it was alleged, doubly malicious by the libel being thus wantonly obtruded upon the notice of the friends and connections of the deceased. This fact was most severely commented on in the Court of King's Bench, and gave rise to not a little indignation elsewhere; malice, however, certainly there was none, the transmitting the paper was of pure accident, and entirely owing to the recommendation of the anonymous correspondent, who could not by possibility have known anything of the obnoxious paragraph about to appear.

Other prosecutions followed—that for libel on the Queen among the rest; but the grand attempt on the part of the Whigs to crush the paper, was not made till the 6th of May, 1821. A short and insignificant

paragraph, containing some observations upon the Hon. Henry Grey Bennett, a brother of Lord Tankerville's, was selected for attack, as involving a breach of privilege; in consequence of which, the printer, Mr. H. F. Cooper the editor, and Mr. Shackell, were ordered to attend at the bar of the House of Commons. A long debate ensued, during which ministers made as fair a stand as the nature of the case would permit, in behalf of their guerilla allies, but which terminated in the committal of Messrs. Weaver and Cooper to Newgate, where they were detained from the 11th of May till the 11th of July, when Parliament was prorogued.

Meanwhile, the most strenuous exertions were made to detect the real delinquents, for, of course, Honorable gentlemen were not to be imposed upon by the unfortunate "men of straw," who had fallen into their clutches, and who, by the way, suffered for an offence of which their judges and accusers openly proclaimed them to be not only innocent but incapable! The terror of imprisonment and the various arts of cross-examination proving insufficient to elicit the truth, recourse was had to a simpler and more conciliatory mode of treatment,—bribery. The storm had failed to force off the editorial cloak,—the golden beams were brought to bear upon it. We have it for certain that an offer was made to a member of the establishment, to stay all impending proceedings, and further, to pay down a sum of 500*l.* on the names of the actual writers being given up; it was rejected with disdain, while such were the precautions taken, that it was impossible to fix Hook, though suspicion began to be awakened, with any share in the concern.

In order to avoid being seen in company with the avowed proprietors, and to elude any watch that might be set upon the office, certain coffee-houses were selected, and designated by numbers ranging from one to ten, at which private conferences might be held, and the business of the paper effectively carried on. A note couched in most melodramatic terms,—“To-night, at half-past eight, No. 5 !” was usually the sort of summons received by the printer, to meet the great unknown at some obscure place of tryst in the purlieus of Westminster.* In order also to cross the scent already hit off, and announced by sundry deep-mouthed pursuers, the following “Reply” framed upon the principle, we presume, that in literature, as in love, everthing is fair, was thrown out in an early number.

“MR. THEODORE HOOK.

“The conceit of some people is amusing; and it has not been unfrequently remarked, that conceit is in abundance where talent is most scarce. Our readers will see that we have received a letter from Mr. Hook, disowning and disavowing all connection with this paper. Partly out of good nature, and partly from an anxiety to shew the gentleman how little desirous we are to be associated with him, we have made a declaration which will doubtless be quite satisfactory to his morbid sensibility and affected squeamishness. We are free to confess, that two things surprise us in this business; the first, that anything which we have thought worthy giving to the public should have been mistaken for Mr. Hook’s, and secondly, that *such a*

* The Spring Gardens coffee-house was frequently selected.

person as Mr. Hook should think himself disgraced by a connection with 'John Bull.'

For sheer impudence, this perhaps may be admitted to "defy competition;" but in point of tact and delicacy of finish it falls infinitely short of a subsequent notice, a perfect gem of its class, added by way of clenching the denial.

"We have received Mr. Theodore Hook's second letter. We are ready to confess that we may have appeared to treat him too unceremoniously; but we will put it to his own feelings, whether the terms of his denial were not, in some degree, calculated to produce a little asperity on our part; we shall never be ashamed, however, to do justice, and we readily declare that we meant no kind of imputation on Mr. Hook's personal character."

The *ruse* answered for awhile, and the paper went on with unabated audacity.

CHAPTER X.

“JOHN BULL” CONTINUED.—“MRS. MUGGINS’S VISIT TO THE QUEEN.”
 —THE QUEEN’S CORONATION CIRCULAR.—LADY JERSEY AND “JOHN
 BULL.”—DR. MAGINN.—LITERARY SPECULATIONS.—THE BELL-
 MAN’S VERSES.—MR. JAMES SMITH’S DISCLAIMER.—EPIGRAM.—
 ANECDOTE.—ATTACKS ON HON. H. GREY BENNETT AND MR. HUME.
 —CAUSES OF THE DECLINE OF “BULL.”

THE formal refusal of Queen Caroline, January, 1821, to accept the allowance proposed in the House of Commons, until her name should be restored to the Liturgy, and the subscription, very warmly *talked about* in certain circles, for the purpose of indemnifying her Majesty for her magnanimity, and of rendering her in future independent of the King and Parliament, were points too good to be missed by her vigilant opponent. But it was reserved for the grand Brandenburgh House Drawing-room, to elicit “Bull’s” bitterest ebullition of satire. We quote some of the less objectionable stanzas, which, as is observed in the “Quarterly,” “are very little different from those which Hook used to *improvise* in the course of a festive evening, and may afford, to a person who never witnessed that marvellous performance, a tolerably accurate notion of what it was:”—

MRS. MUGGINS'S VISIT TO THE QUEEN.

TUNE—" *Have you been to Abingdon.*"

"Have you been to Brandenburg—heigh, ma'am ; ho,
ma'am ?

Have you been to Brandenburg, ho ?

—Oh, yes ; I have been, ma'am,

To visit the Queen, ma'am,

With the rest of the gallanty show—show,

With the rest of the gallanty show.

"And who were your company—heigh, ma'am ; ho, ma'am ?

And who were your company, ho ?

—We happened to drop in

With *gemmen* from Wapping,

And *ladies* from Blowbladder-row—Row,

And *ladies* from Blowbladder-row.

"And what said her Majesty—heigh, ma'am ; ho, ma'am ?

What said her Majesty, ho ?

—What I understood 's

She 's come for our goods,

And when she has got them she 'll go—go,

And when she has got them she 'll go.

"And who were attending her—heigh, ma'am ; ho, ma'am ?

Who were attending her, ho ?

—Lord Hood for a man,

For a maid Lady Anne,

And Alderman Wood for a *beau*—*beau*,

And Alderman Wood for a *beau*.

“ And had she no countesses—heigh, ma’am ; ho, ma’am ?

Had she no countesses, ho ?

—O yes ! Lady Jersey,

Who might have worn kersey,

Had folks their deserts, here below—low,

Had folks their deserts here below.

“ Was no one from Croxteth there—heigh, ma’am ; ho,
ma’am ?

No one from Croxteth there, ho ?

—Oh, no, Lady Sefton

Would sooner have left town,

Both her and her daughters, than go—go,

Both her and her daughters, than go.

“ And had she no commoners—heigh, ma’am ; ho, ma’am ?

Had she no commoners, ho ?

—I happened to look,

And could find in her book

Only Fergusson, Taylor, and Co.—Co.,

Fergusson, Taylor, and Co.

“ And had she no son-in-law—heigh, ma’am ; ho, ma’am ?

Had she no son-in-law, ho ?

—Yes ! time-serving Leopold,

A puppet that we uphold,

Though neither for *use* nor for *show*—*show*,

Neither for *use* nor for *show*.

“ And did they meet tenderly—heigh, ma’am ; ho, ma’am ?

Did they meet tenderly, ho ?

—They were both so intent

About *taxes* and *rent*,

That they never once thought of their *woe*—*woe*,

That they never once thought of their *woe*.

“ And had she no counsellors—heigh, ma’am ; ho, ma’am ?

Had she no counsellors, ho ?

—Yes ; one Mr. Brougham,

Who sneak’d out of her room,

Pretending the *circuit to go—go*,

Pretending the *circuit to go*.

“ Had she no solicitor—heigh, ma’am ; ho, ma’am ?

Had she no solicitor, ho ?

—Yes ; one Mr. Vizard,

Who, being no wizard,

She overboard hastened to throw—throw,

She overboard hastened to throw.

* * * *

“ And has she a *clergyman*—heigh, ma’am ; ho, ma’am ?

Has she a *clergyman*, ho ?

—Yes ; one Doctor —,

Who puffs like a bellows,

The coals of sedition to blow—blow,

The coals of sedition to blow.

“ And has she a *banking-house*—heigh, ma’am ; ho, ma’am ?

Has she a banking-house, ho ?

—When Coutts was unhandsome,

She shifted to Ransom,

To whom she does nothing but owe—owe,

To whom she does nothing but owe.

“ And what are her *drinkables*—heigh, ma’am ; ho, ma’am ?

What are her drinkables, ho ?

—It being but noon,

She said ’twas too soon

For any thing else but *Noyeau—yeau*,

Any thing else but *Noyeau*.

* * * *

“ Will *she* have a drawing-room—heigh, ma’am ; ho, ma’am ?

Will she have a drawing-room, ho ?

—Oh, yes ; I presume

That she *might* find a *room*,

If she could but find any to go—go,

If she could but find any to go.”

&c.

&c.

&c.

The Westminster Abbey business soon followed, and the Queen’s subsequent and very modest demand for an *encore*, in the shape of a separate coronation of herself, suggested a *burlesque* ceremonial, in which all her friends, in their degrees, found appropriate parts. We give a sample of the

CIRCULAR.

“ Her Majesty having gone to several doors of Westminster Abbey and Westminster Hall, on Thursday, where Her Majesty was, in an *unmanly* and *unmannerly* way, refused admittance, and treated very *rudely* by the *civil* power : Her Majesty having got up very early on Saturday morning, consulted her friends, and having taken all their opinions (which were decidedly against it) determined to be crowned on last Monday, upon which Her Majesty issued her orders by the twopenny-post to summon all persons who would come to the ceremony : *upon which* they assembled in their proper places, and the ceremony took place at twelve o’clock. Several very respectable people having collected together, the procession moved to the parish church in the following order :—

LADY ANNE HAMILTON,

In a sky-blue jacket, ornamented with wreaths of joinquilles and pionies, supported by a *gardener*, and followed by her six maids throwing away *thyme*.

DRUMS.

Parish Beadle of Hammersmith, with his staff.

A FIFE.

The Queen's Eight Trumpeters—

The CHRONICLE.	BRITISH PRESS.
— STATESMAN.	COBBETT.
— TRUE BRITON.	BENBOW.
— EXAMINER.	WOOLER.

Sergeant Trumpeter—

THE OLD TIMES.

The Queen's Attorney-General The Queen's Solicitor-General
 carrying a copy of a bond. carrying a letter of credit.

Chaplains.

Par nobile,—Noble *Fellowes*.

Clergymen who have prayed for the Queen, two and two.

The Bishop of —,

With his wig powdered blue, to distinguish him from the
 rest of the Bench.

The QUEEN'S TRUMPETS.

Mrs. B—, Mrs. W—, and Mrs. D—,

Carrying white silk banners, with inscriptions :

“Innocence Triumphant.”

“Oh, the roast beef of Old England.”

Joseph Hume, Esq., bearing his pestle, his mortar in his hand.
 (Here the Peers should have walked, but there were none.)

DOCTOR BORLAND,

And his Four Assistants, with *Madeira*.

JOHN CAM HOBHOUSE, Esq.,	PETER MOORE, Esq.,
In a yellow coat with red but-	In the same dress as
tons, and a pink pig-tail.	Mr. Hobhouse.

PRINCE WILLIAM, OF BROWNLOW STREET,

Carrying the crown, covered with a linen napkin.”

&c.

&c.

&c.

There can be no doubt that the broad, not to say coarse, humour of these "squibs" and songs—the latter set to simple and popular tunes—was admirably adapted to work its way among the lower orders, who, like a comprehensive class of their superiors, "ever love the laughing side;" especially if it be the singing one, too. And, on the other hand, the less obvious allusions, appreciable but by the few, hints of mysteriously-acquired knowledge, shadows of coming accusation, together with the more open and advised assaults upon individual character, unquestionably availed to detach and deter the females of the Whig aristocracy from personal attendance on the Queen, while those of the middle ranks, more English and more sensitive still, were speedily driven into complete alienation from her cause.

One lady, indeed, scorned to fly, and even made a gallant endeavour to carry the war into the enemy's country. "Bold yet half-blushing the gay Lady Jersey"—on whom, by the bye, it must be observed, the rod had been laid most lightly—rather in sorrow than in anger—issued a manifesto, by virtue of which all persons whatsoever, found aiding, abetting, purchasing, harbouring, or perusing any copy of the pestilent publication, yclept "John Bull," were to be excluded thenceforth and for ever from the light of her ladyship's countenance, and banished those realms of fashion, over which she exercised sovereign sway. Alas! the only effect of the denunciation, was to produce a simple intimation, in the next number of "Bull," that the very hand that was then guiding the pen had been pressed, but two days previously, by the

angry potentate herself, at her own mansion ; and that the writer entertained the fullest assurance of again being honoured with that mark of distinction at her forthcoming *soirée*. It was in vain to fight at such odds, and Lady Jersey, like the rest, after an unsuccessful action, gradually withdrew from a post which she must have soon felt to be untenable.

The bringing about these results, whether by right or wrong, must be attributed in a greater degree than to any other agency, to the unsparing personalities of Hook and his confederates. The names of these while still living, and living it may be to regret the hot intemperance of their youth, it would be manifestly improper even at this distance of time to disclose. To Dr. James Hook, the editor's elder brother and his assistant from the first, this scruple need not apply ; the less so as the articles from his pen, though among the most able and powerful, are not characterised by any offence against propriety or good taste—they consist chiefly of a series of letters addressed to various statesmen under the signature of "Fitz-Harding," and are such as might have been avowed without discredit. As for the old Arcadian, it is doubtful if he ever actually engaged in wielding the potent engine he had helped to construct ; if he did so, it must have been in a very subordinate character ;—more probable it is, that he fell back upon his congenial employment of delighting the galleries and *Terry-fying*, as Scott used to call it, the novelists by theatrical adaptations of their favourite works.

One article and only one, was written by the late Dr. Maginn. Hook, it seems, in 1823, having learnt

that some six or seven newspapers were in the market, prevailed upon Mr. Shackell to purchase the lot, which he did for 300 guineas, with the view of establishing a journal (to be published on the Wednesday, so as not to interfere with "Bull,") upon their ruins. Partly to assist the old, but principally to superintend the new speculation, to which Hook also was to be a large contributor, Maginn was summoned from Cork, and engaged at a moderate salary. Twenty pounds a-month we believe to have been the sum.

His talents were, doubtless, of a high order, and his scholarship and education infinitely superior to those of his friend Hook, for such he soon became, but unfortunately he possessed the same excitable and erratic temperament only exaggerated, hibernized to a degree, that rendered it somewhat unsafe to rely upon him in a matter demanding the prudence and punctuality to be observed in the conduct of a weekly paper.* So far as "John Bull" was concerned the idea of retaining his services was speedily abandoned.

Its ally started fairly enough, but the circulation it obtained was not commensurate with the projectors'

* In wit he was scarcely inferior to Hook, whom, indeed, he resembled in the weak, as well as the strong points of his character. One anecdote, a mere straw in the wind, will suffice to shew the man. A friend, at his table, was complimenting him on the fine flavour of his wine, and begged to be informed of the merchant's name. "Oh, I get it from a house close by, just as I happen to want it," replied the host, "the London tavern." "Indeed!" said the other; "a capital cellar, unquestionably; but have you not to pay rather an extravagant price for it?" "I don't know—I don't know," returned the doctor; "I believe they put down something in a book!"

expectations ; and Hook, who had not the patience to play an uphill game, soon threw it up in disgust ; it lingered on for some months under the direction of the Doctor, and was finally abandoned at a heavy loss. Much the same may be said of a Review upon the plan of the "Literary Gazette," which had been started some months previously, also at the instigation of Hook, under the title of the "London Literary Journal." Terry was associated in the scheme, and was to supply theatricals, fine arts, &c., while backed up by the powerful influence of their established organ, the most sanguine hopes were entertained of its success. The infant, however, proving sickly, it experienced a neglect on the part of its parents, only to be met with, it is to be hoped, among Indians and editors, and as a natural consequence drooped and died.

Another scheme, was an attempt to revive the "European," in 1825. Messrs. Shackell and Miller again produced funds, and under the auspices of Mr. Edward Dubois, himself a host, who accepted the management of the concern, it gave promise of affording an exception to the general rule—that there is no resurrection for magazines. The first two numbers were brilliant ; but again Hook's ardour cooled ; his contributions were obtained with increasing difficulty, and fell off in bulk and value, their place being hastily filled up with any available material that might be at hand. Proprietors and editors, not to mention the public, grew weary of such regular irregularity, and after a feverish existence of about eighteen months, the "European" likewise descended to the tomb of its forefathers.

To the names already mentioned of early writers in the "John Bull," there may be added those of Mr. Thomas Haynes Bayley, and Mr. Barham (Thomas Ingoldsby); the latter especially, was for some time a pretty constant contributor, but this was not till after that acerbity and recklessness of crimination had been laid aside, which rendered the paper in its youth so famous and so formidable. We quote some graceful stanzas from the pen of Mr. Bayley, better, perhaps, adapted for the embossed page of an "Amaranth," or "Book of Beauty," than for the dingy columns of the belligerent "Bull," but, as the reader will, we trust, admit, acceptable anywhere:—

THE BELLMAN'S VERSES TO "BULL'S"
CUSTOMERS.

- "A happy new year to the readers of "Bull!"
May their spirits be light and their pockets be full,
May they jest round the fire that cheerfully burns,
And live to enjoy — many happy returns.
- "A happy new year, and a happy new light,
To those who begin to perceive wrong from right,
And "Bull," in his pasture, already discerns,
From error's dark path — many happy returns.
- "A happy new year, and succession of years,
To the Parliament men, whether Commons or Peers,
Let them trust to Joe Hume all the nation's concerns,
And they 'll get by his zeal — many happy returns.
- "A happy new year, or four score if they please,
To all *merry-tory-us* British M.P's.;
May they meet the reward which true loyalty earns,
In County and Town—many happy returns.

" A happy new year to my mercantile friends,
To the trade of this town, at the east and west ends,
And may those who have lost in the bubble concerns
Hereafter receive—many happy returns.

" A happy new year to the far distant brave,
Who combat the foeman, or battle the wave ;
For each, in his home, there's a heart that still burns ;
God send them, say I—many happy returns.

" A happy new year to the fair of our isles,
Whose service is duty o'erpaid by their smiles ;
For ages of sorrow, of scorn, and of spurns,
The confessions of love are the happy returns.

" A happy new year to all manner of folks,
From Billy, who twaddles, to Sammy, who jokes :
God bless ye, my masters, and all your concerns,
And send you a great many happy returns."

Jan. 1, 1826.

Among others to whom the paternity of " Bull " was at one time ascribed, and with such confidence as to call forth a public denial of that questionable honour, was Mr. James Smith, a conversational wit of high rank, and beyond comparison the best epigrammatist of the day ;* in this respect he possessed

* His lines upon Craven Street, where he himself for many years resided, are pretty well known ; but as the reply by Sir George Rose has not, we believe, appeared in print, we present the pair to the reader.

In Craven Street, Strand, ten attorneys find place,
And ten dark coal-barges are moored at its base :
Fly Honesty, fly, to some safer retreat,
There's *craft* in the river, and *craft* in the street.

no little advantage over Hook—economising his good things; never suffering a happy thought to escape but uniformly embalming it in some half-dozen easily remembered lines. In the printed collection of his *jeux d'esprit* we miss the following, occasioned by the

REPLY.

Why should Honesty seek any safer retreat,
 From the lawyers or barges, odd-rot'em?
 For the lawyers are *just* at the top of the street,
 And the barges are *just* at the bottom.

But Mr. Smith's happiest effort was enclosed in a short note to his friend Count D'Orsay:—

27, Craven Street, Monday, June 6.

My dear Count.—Will you give me Gallic immortality, by translating the subjoined into French.—Sincerely yours, &c.

PIUS ÆNEAS.

Virgil, whose magic verse enthral, —
 And who in verse is greater?
 By turns his wand'ring hero calls,
 Now *pius*, and now *pater*.
 But when prepared the worst to brave,
 An action that must pain us,
 Queen Dido meets him in the cave,
 He dubs him *dux TROJANUS*.
 And well he changes thus the word
 On that occasion sure;
PIUS ÆNEAS were absurd,
 And *PATER premature*!

It is worthy of remark, that the piece of sound criticism contained in these lines is to be attributed to Addison, though he somehow missed the pun. On reading the sixth number of the *Tatler*, where the subject is discussed, he at once detected Steele to be the author, having himself pointed out to him the poet's nicety of taste, in varying the epithet with the circumstances.

complaint, as it is said, of a late fascinating actress, who was possessed of that most inconvenient of all theatrical appendages, a jealous husband :—

“ This pair in matrimony
Go most unequal snacks :
He gets all the Honey,
And she gets all the *whacks*.”

Mr. Smith also assisted Mathews in the composition of several of his entertainments, * but his reputation may well rest upon the “Rejected Ad-

* The title of one of these pieces, “Earth, Air, and Water,” gave rise, according to Theodore Hook, to a somewhat curious blunder ; he dispatched one evening a clever and ingenious Scotch acquaintance with the newspaper orders to the Lyceum ; and on the following morning asked his opinion of the performance. The gentleman said that it was rather comical upon the whole, but that there was a little too much matter of fact about it, and that as for fun he did not think quite so much was made of it as might have been. Hook asked if the rest of the audience laughed ; —he said not much, but this he attributed to there being but few people in the house. “Well, but,” said the editor, “surely you liked the songs,—did you not think Mathews a very droll person ?” —The gentleman replied that there were no songs, and that he did not think Mathews so *very* droll ; he had a good deal of quiet humour certainly, and an admirable delivery ; he had never seen a more gentlemanly man in his life, bating that, perhaps, he was a *little too fat*. Hook was completely puzzled,—a dull entertainment, *no* songs, a *thin* house, and a fat performer !—it was past comprehension, till a reference to the play-bill shewed that his Scotch friend, having visited the theatre on the *Wednesday*, had been listening unsuspectingly to Mr. Bartley’s Lecture on the Structure of the Universe, which was delivered on the alternate nights ; and which, from its subject, he was quite convinced was no other than the celebrated representation of the great humorist.

dresses," of which he contributed the larger portion; a series of poems, &c., which as a fellow-traveller once gravely informed him, did not appear so *very bad* —he did not think that they ought *all* to have been rejected!

As for the "Bull," we are pretty sure he was, as he declared, perfectly guiltless of all connection with it; indeed it hardly afforded a field for the lucubrations of one whose muse was so uniformly good-natured, and whose politics were always those, as he said, of the lady he happened to hand down to dinner. He used, however, to relate, by way of an illustration of the contrary aspects, under which the paper was viewed at its first appearance, that at a large assembly at Lady ——'s, a nobleman of the Tory party eagerly forced his way up to him, grasped him by both hands, and complimented him in the warmest terms on the brilliancy of his wit, and the essential service it was rendering to the country, through the medium of "Bull." Mr. Smith bowed, passed on, and was speedily accosted by an elderly gentleman, a country member in the Whig interest, who, in language not less glowing, denounced the publication as a disgrace to the age, an outrage against all authority and law, scandalous, libellous, demoralizing! adding, that he had taken it upon himself, in consideration of his long intimacy with him, to give the lie to a current report, and to deny that Mr. Smith was in any way mixed up with so abominable a production.

The death of the Queen, in the summer of 1821, produced a decided alteration in the tone and temper of the paper; in point of fact, its occupation was

now gone ; the main if not the sole object of its establishment had been brought about by other and unforeseen events, the combination it had laboured so energetically to thwart was now dissolved by a higher and resistless agency. Still, it is not to be supposed that a machine which brought in a profit of something above 4,000*L per annum*, half of which fell to the share of Hook, was to be lightly thrown up, simply because its original purpose was attained ; the dissolution of the "League" did not exist then as a precedent. The Queen was no longer to be feared, but there were Whigs and Radicals enow to be held in check, and, above all, there was a handsome income to be realized by fair and legitimate means.

Besides, whatever may have been the nature of Hook's feelings at starting, his passions had been excited, and indeed his interests prejudiced, as the work went on. The secret of his connection with the paper was in too many hands to be kept long. Suspicion grew into certainty, and his unfortunate defalcation at the Mauritius, *adhuc sub judice*, was a powerful weapon in the grasp of his enemies. Little surprise can be felt, that no disposition to shew mercy should have been exhibited, on the part of such roughly-handled individuals as Mr. Henry Grey Bennett and Mr. Hume ; and though the former eventually backed out of the contest, papers were moved for, reports printed, and the commissioners urged on to a degree of severity, which amounted, in the eyes of the ex-Treasurer, to little short of persecution.

Hook, in return, rattled his "paper pellets" about their ears, with the rapidity of Mr. Perkins's steam-

gun — sometimes a volley of a dozen shots were discharged at once, as when about that number of lines from Horace, — each containing some form of the word, *humus*, or its cognates, — were converted by ingenious translation, into so many prophetic allusions to the history of the indefatigable M. P. “*Ex Humili potens* — from a surgeon to a Member of Parliament;” “*Ne quis Hum-asse velit* — Let no one call Hume an ass;” “*Humili modo loqui*, — To talk Scotch like HUME,” &c. ; not one so good as the motto with which he afterwards provided him, “*Graius expers catenis* — I have got rid of my Greek bonds.” His other enemy he pursued with a bitterness of invective, still more intense, but Mr. Hume was his favourite butt — on him his hits fell palpable but comparatively light, and he grew as used to the planting them, as Mr. Martin, of Connemara,* is said to have been to the “winging” his old territorial and political adversary, D——. It became a sort of recreative habit to expose Hume and his blunders — to hold him up illuminated in a blaze of ridicule, to the admiration of friends and foes. Hume *loquitur* :—

“I hastened my genius to show,
Though I dealt not in figures of speech;
But, speaking of figures, we know,
Is ever in Maberley’s reach !

* “Oh, that ever I should miss Dick D—— !” is reported to have been the exclamation of that particularly Irish gentleman, as he threw down his pistol in disgust, on the occasion of their last meeting. Unfortunately, he not only missed his man, but his election also. He is said to have made a point of calling out every one that contested the county with him, “It was a personal affront !”

And 'tis O, what did become o' me ?
 O what did I do ?
 I proved, with a great deal of mummary,
 One and one to be equal to two !
 wo, wo, wo, &c.

"I wish I had stuck to my text ;
 My fame had continued alive —
 But, alas ! I grew bold, and tried next
 To prove two and two to make five :
 And 'tis O, what did become o' me ?
 O, what did I do ?
 I swore it, and Walter and Finerty
 Promised to bluster it through —
 ough, ough, ough, &c.

"But there was a fellow called Crocker,
 Who never was heard of before,
 And, with the assistance of Cocker,
 He shewed two and two to make four.
 And 'tis O what did become o' me ?
 O, what did I do ?
 He proved all my arguments flummery,
 And all my figures untrue—
 ue, ue, ue, &c.

"The navy I next took in hand,
 And I just mistook houses for ships,
 And, mixing the sea and the land,
 Made seventeen millions of slips.
 And 'tis, O what will become o' me ?
 O, what shall I do ?
 Croker took down every sum o' me,
 And shewed not a sum to be true,
 ue, ue, ue, &c."

At the least stir, to use his own words, "*Humi procumbit Bos*"—Bull falls foul of Hume. Saving, however, when these individuals crossed his path, his virulence began materially to abate for some time without any perceptible diminution of vigour. Sam Rogers's puns took the place of political libels; *Dorothea Ramsbottom* succeeded to *Mrs. Muggins*, and Hook by degrees abandoned himself to what, after all, was the natural bent of his humour, jovial, joyous, extravagant, now rising to the most pointed wit, now descending to the broadest farce, occasionally diverging into personality, but ceasing to betray a malice or bitterness in his mirth.

Unfortunately that itch for novelty which was inherent in him, and which we have seen exemplified in the number of literary speculations of which he was the prime mover, led him to dissipate his spirit in a dozen different quarters (leaving at last little but a *caput mortuum* for "Bull"), instead of directing his energies to the sustaining a property which might have yielded him a handsome provision for life—one superior even to that which he had lost. Of course the paper declined in sale, as its character became essentially changed; and though it continued to maintain a respectable circulation, as a sort of Club-house and Conservative organ, its increased expenses must, we suspect, latterly have left the division of profits little more than a mere matter of form. Hook, indeed, as editor, received to the day of his death a fixed salary, but the proprietorship had long since passed into other hands.

CHAPTER XI.

"SAYINGS AND DOINGS."—SECOND AND THIRD SERIES.—OFFENCE TAKEN BY MR. MATHEWS AT THE "FUGGLESTONES."—"GERVASE SKINNER."—"MARTHA, THE GIPSEY."—GHOST STORY.—ANECDOTES,—"THE CHRISTMAS BOX."—PUNNING.—BON MOTS.

IN 1824, Mr. Hook published the first series of that collection of tales which, under the title of "Saying and Doings," placed him at once in the highest rank of the novelists. The first idea and plan of the work, were struck out during the sitting of a sort of "John Bull" conclave, held at Fulham, at which Terry and Mr. Shackell were present, and had origin in a suggestion of the latter; delighted with the anecdotes of colonial life, which his friend was pouring forth, he conceived that they might be turned to better account than the mere entertainment of a dinner party, and hit upon the title at which Hook caught with eagerness.

So convinced was the latter, that his first tale, the "Man of Sorrow," had not been fairly appreciated, that he actually embodied in his new essay the rejected attempt of *Mr. Alfred Allendale*, condensed indeed and purged from its impurities, but not materially altered from the original. The style and incidents of "Merton" retain much of the crudity and extravagance of its predecessor; the catastrophe, how-

ever, by a judicious alteration, is considerably relieved of its improbability. In the first version, the hero's wife is killed on the evening of their wedding-day, by the accidental explosion of a pistol in the travelling carriage; in the second, when riches at length flow in, when fortune and mama begin to smile in earnest, and all obstacles to the match are overcome, the death of the lady worn out by hope delayed, and reiterated disappointments, gives full and final confirmation to the adage: "There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip."

The resemblance of the two stories to each other, or rather their identity, seems to have provoked hostile criticism, to which the author thus alludes in a letter to his publishers.

Cleveland Row, 1830.

Dear Sirs.—I received your note about the Scots newspaper; if you mean that *I* should take any public notice of what appears in a newspaper *about me*, you do not yet know me. I would as soon cut my hand off. As for the story of *Merton*, I never made either secret or mystery about it. I preserved the incidents of a novel which I wrote when I was a boy, and of which, as far as the language, &c. go, I was very soon heartily ashamed; but which I thought would afford a skeleton to fill up with better matter. As all my friends, at least those really my friends, knew the whole of the history six years ago, I wonder my enemies did not find it out sooner.—Yours truly,

THEODORE HOOK.

Much better in every respect is the story of "Danvers," the *parvenu*; although such was the offence

taken in "certain quarters" (as the newspapers say), at points of supposed resemblance, that the author thought it necessary to introduce a disclaimer, by way of preface to the second series, of any design of caricaturing individuals. In this particular instance, he was doubtless sincere; the cap is one of those useful ready-made sizes that fit a multitude of wearers, and numbers might be pointed out on whose heads it might be adjusted with equal nicety, as on that of Mr. Watson Taylor, who was, we believe, the chief claimant to the distinction.

In general, however, the more prominent characters in Hook's novels are unquestionably portraits. No one, for example, would find difficulty in detecting under "a viridity of intellect which was truly refreshing, a newness and a single-mindedness unalloyed by the baser attributes of *this* world, which were highly delightful," the original of *Rodney*, the poetic schoolmaster. To many of the Anglo-Indian sketches, the journal kept during the author's sojourn at the Mauritius, would, we are told, supply a key; while upon some others we hope ourselves to be able to throw a little light. In point of fact, Hook always denied the possession of inventive faculties. There was, doubtless, truth as well as modesty in the assertion, "Give me a story to tell and I can tell it, but I cannot create." He might have added, "Shew me human nature in any of its phases, and I can draw it to the life."

Of the second series of "Sayings and Doings," he says with perfect correctness, as his own reviewer:—"These tales are in every way superior to the former

series. The best is "Passion and Principle," the last; the worst is the first: and it is upon this conviction, and from a knowledge that the stories were written in the order in which they are printed, that we found an expectation that the writer will progressively improve should he continue his literary career." *John Bull*, 1825, p. 53.

The prediction was soon and amply verified by the appearance of a concluding series embracing, if we remember right, three tales—one of a serious, another of a comic, and a third of a supernatural cast, each admirable in its way. Such, indeed, had been the success of the first three volumes, of which no less than six thousand copies were sold, that in addition to the original sum, 600*l.* paid for the copy-right, Mr. Colburn on completing the purchase of the second series for a thousand guineas, very handsomely presented the author with a cheque for 150*l.*, to which he subsequently added another for 200*l.* In 1829 the third series was published, for which also Mr. Hook received a thousand guineas.

In "Cousin William," which may be considered as a *pendant* to "Passion and Principle," and in which the victory and its results of passion are wrought out, indications are given of the existence of a tragic power, which he but rarely consented to display. To the full as terrible as the conceptions of Sue or Dumas, the story in question has the advantage of being treated with a morality and delicacy foreign from those writers. There is none of that subtle and voluptuous confusion of good and evil, which is at once the characteristic and disgrace of the French

school; and although the subject is one, to our thinking, better avoided altogether in a work intended for general perusal, vice is, nevertheless, fairly depicted, and no flimsy vein of sentimentality interposes to soften its hideous mien, and lend a grace to the violator of law and religion.

In "Gervase Skinner," on the other hand, whose title betrays the point, "penny wise and pound foolish," the spirit of fun takes one of its wildest flights; the effects of stinginess are delineated in a steady progression of misadventures, charged and overcharged with the richest humour. The players too, the quondam companions of the author, afford him and his readers fair sport; and those at all familiar with the proverbial and never-ending bickerings of the sons and daughters of harmony, will see little caricature in the Fugglestone correspondence respecting the "Village Bells," &c. Mathews, however,—Hook's old but somewhat irritable friend—thought otherwise; and, in a harmless quiz upon an itinerant company, fancied he discovered a deliberate insult to a profession which all, but the most prejudiced, admit to contain very many amiable and excellent members of society. Reference, indeed, need only be made to Mr. Mathews himself, beloved and esteemed by all who knew him—and high and noble names might be adduced—to afford proof, were proof wanting, that the character of a gentleman may be preserved untarnished throughout a life devoted even to the less dignified departments of the drama. *His* claims to respect at all events, Hook would have been the last to call in question. A temporary interrup-

tion of their intimacy ensued, which, however, the following *amende honorable*, the natural outburst of a frank and generous disposition, served immediately and effectually to remove.

“ *To Charles Mathews, Esq.*

“ Cleveland Row, March 5, 1829.

“ MY DEAR MATHEWS,

“ You are now about one of the oldest acquaintances I have (or just now have not); some of my happiest hours have been passed in your company; I hate mincing (except in a case of *veal*). There *is* a difference, not perhaps existing between *us*, but between you *now* and yourself at other times. They (*on*) say that you have been annoyed with one of my tales, as if any man except a pacha had more than one; and our good-natured *friends*, bless them! make out that *you* are personally affected by some of the jokes about the Fugglestones, and other imaginary personages. Now, I verily believe that, if I had read that story to you before it was published, you would have enjoyed it more than any body who has read it; since to ridicule the bad part of a profession can be no satire upon the good; and, as I have said somewhere before, Lawrence might as well be annoyed at the abuse of sign-painters, or Halford angry at a satire upon quacks, as you personally with any thing reflecting upon the lower part of the theatrical world.

“ From you yourself I verily believe I culled the art of ridiculing the humbugs of the profession.

However, why you should suppose that *I*, after having for years (in every way I could) contributed—needlessly, I admit—to support your talents, merits, and character, professional and private, could mean to offend *you*, I cannot imagine. I can only say that nothing was further from my intention than to wound *your* feelings, or those of any other individual living, by what seemed to me a fair *travestie* of a fair subject for ridicule, and which I repeat never could apply to *you*, or any man in your sphere or station.

“Now, the upshot of all this is *this*,—where not the smallest notion of personal affront was contemplated, I think no personal feeling should remain. If *you* think so, come and call upon me, or tell me where I may pay *you* a visit. If you don’t think so, why say nothing about it, and burn this letter. But do whichever of these things you may, rest assured I do not forget old associations, and that *I am*, and *shall be*, my dear Mathews, as much yours as ever. And now, having said my say, I remain,

“Yours most truly,

“THE. E. HOOK.”

Mathews was not a man to resist such an appeal; illness and anxiety had rendered him morbidly tetchy, but his kindness of heart was intact, and, unable to quit his own house, he readily received the proffered visit of the offender. There was another individual who possibly might not have been so easily appeased, but for that pachydermatous self-complacency with which Providence benignantly invests certain people, more especially obnoxious to the shafts of ridicule.

The hero himself, *Gervase Skinner*, a sketch admirably true to nature, had an unconscious prototype in a Mr. E——, a member of the Irish bar, whose genuine devices to avoid unnecessary expenditure, were nearly as amusing as those attributed to him in the novel.

A story is told of him, that when staying with the C——s, at Dover, he was requested to escort the ladies of the party to the Castle, to “lionize” the fortifications; on coming away, Mrs. C——, observing that he had assumed rather an abstracted air, and had, apparently, forgotten to remunerate the sergeant who had attended them, borrowed half a crown of him for that purpose. This, afterwards, at the inn, knowing his eccentricity, she offered to repay. Mr. E——, however, “could not think of accepting it;” and really appeared half affronted at her insisting upon discharging the debt, throwing down the coin with becoming indignation on the table. There it lay till the waiter announced dinner, when, presenting his left arm to the lady, he contrived, in passing, to slip the piece of money (unobserved, as he supposed) off the table, with his right hand, and deposit it securely in his pocket! He thought, perhaps, with old Lady Cork, that prudence is the better part of liberality, as well as valour. She is said to have been so affected by one of Sidney Smith’s charity sermons, that she borrowed a guinea of a gentleman next her to put into the plate.

But, for a winter’s tale — to arrest the attention of Master Bobby, freed for six weeks from the claims of Pius Æneas and Agamemnon, King of men; to make the flesh of elderly ladies creep, and matter-of-fact gen-

tllemen to declare that they "don't believe any such nonsense;" to excite the antipathies of our nature, and open an avenue to that strange, half pleasing, half chilling sensation of awe which assails us in the presence of the mysterious,—what shall compare with "Martha, the Gipsej," the most absorbing and unimpeachable of ghost stories? * Whatever degree of credit may be attached to the narration itself, that Hook was sincere in the confession of faith with which he prefaces it, we have reason to feel assured:—

"It is," he says, "I find, right and judicious, most carefully and publicly, to disavow a belief in supernatural visitings; but it will be long before I become either so wise or so bold as to make any such unqualified declaration. I am not weak enough to imagine myself surrounded by spirits and phantoms, or jostling through a crowd of spectres, as I walk the streets; neither do I give credence to all the idle tales of ancient dames or frightened children, touching such matters: but when I breathe the air and see the grass grow under my feet, I cannot but feel that *He* who gives me power to inhale the one or stand erect upon the other, has also the power to use for special purposes such means and agency as He, in His wisdom, may see fit; and which, in point of fact, are not more incomprehensible to us than the very simplest effects which we every day witness, arising from unknown causes.

"Philosophers may prove, and, in the might of their littleness and the erudition of their ignorance, develope and disclose, argue and discuss; but when the sage, who sneers at the possibility of ghosts, will explain to me the doctrine of attraction and gravitation, or tell me why the wind blows,

* A reference to the volume convicts us of an error; "Martha the Gipsej" is printed in the first series.

why the tides ebb and flow, or why the light shines—effects perceptible by all men—then will I admit the justice of ~~his~~ incredulity—then will I join the ranks of the incredulous.” —*Sayings and Doings*, vol.iii. p. 322.

All the particulars — the refusal backed by an oath, of the respectable gentleman who paid poor rates and subscribed to the Mendicity Society, to relieve the importunate beggar-woman — her malediction, and threat of the three visitations; the first fulfilled when, dashed from a curricie, the maimed victim perceives Martha grinning at him from among the crowd; the second, when on drawing aside the blind to give light to his dying child, he encounters the malignant gaze of the hag, from the opposite pavement; the last, when, after a lapse of years, his family party is disturbed by a thunder storm, and on the door being burst violently open, the same vision meets his eye, though unseen by others, and the full accomplishment of the curse, by his sudden death during the ensuing night,—all these particulars, with the exception of some trifling heightening of the first accident, Hook stoutly maintained to be true; and he did so on the authority of an intimate friend, Major D——, who professed to have been himself present at the catastrophe. How far chance may have led to the seeming realization of the old woman’s prediction in the two first instances, and a morbid imagination supplied the last, the reader may compute for himself according to the measure of his scepticism, but that the story rests on some sort of foundation cannot admit of a doubt.

Another case of the supernatural, Mr. Hook used to

relate as having fallen more immediately under his own observation, and in which he was, in a slight degree, concerned. He stated that, some years ago, the eldest son of a certain noble lord found it convenient to break up his establishment in London, and to join his father, then resident in Paris, being thus compelled to abandon the society of a young lady who had been for a considerable time, as it is termed, "under his protection," and who was expecting shortly to be confined. For some weeks, letters arrived regularly from the object of his attachment; suddenly and without any apparent cause they ceased, and a very natural anxiety was in consequence excited in the heart of the young nobleman. One evening, about an hour after the family had retired to rest, Lady —— heard a noise proceeding from the library, where she had left her son reading. On rushing to the spot, she discovered the young man extended on the floor pale and senseless! The usual restoratives being administered, he by degrees recovered consciousness; but a wildness of manner and a degree of terror was noticeable in his demeanour beyond what might be attributed to the mere effects of indisposition. After considerable pressing, he was induced to confess that his nerves had been fearfully shaken by an event not less ill-boding than mysterious.

"He had been sitting," he said, "with his attention fully occupied by the book he was perusing, when a sort of apprehension stole over him of the presence of another person in the room; no sound had struck upon his ear and no shadow passed across his gaze, but a suspicion, rapidly deepening into a

certainly, that he was not *alone*, took full possession of his mind. For a time he felt unwilling, almost unable, to withdraw his eyes from the page ; but, the feeling increasing in intensity and amounting to positive alarm, he raised them with an effort, and beheld those of a thin and wasted figure, who was standing opposite, fixed mournfully upon him. The features were those of Miss —— ; but so worn were they by sickness and suffering, and, above all, so changed by the peculiar and terrible expression of anguish which marked them, as scarcely to be recognized as those of the beautiful girl he had ‘ left lamenting.’ In her arms she bore an infant. More he could not recall—a conviction seized him that what he saw was not of this world ; his brain grew dizzy ; his limbs were paralyzed, and he fell ! ”

All this was very politely received by the medical gentleman in attendance, who proceeded, at once, to explain the phenomena on extremely scientific principles, talked very learnedly and very unintelligibly of the sensorial functions, inquired if he had ever seen blue dogs, and took a few extra ounces of blood. The patient, however, was not to be reasoned or mystified out of the belief that the accusing spirit had stood before him ; and, at his urgent request, his mother wrote to her sister, resident in London, begging her to cause inquiries to be made respecting the condition of Miss ——, but without at the time throwing out the least hint of anything remarkable having occurred. This letter Theodore Hook stated that he saw, and if we remember right, he added, that he himself, on being applied to, obtained and forwarded intelligence

of the young lady in question having died in giving birth to a child, in the course of the very night on which the supposed apparition had been seen; and further, that neither he nor Lady B—— was made acquainted with the previous circumstances, till the arrival of that answer established the fact of the strange coincidence, and somewhat disturbed the philosophy of the French physician.

From his unquestionable belief in the preceding narratives, it will be readily concluded that Mr. Hook was a man of a more than ordinarily superstitious turn of mind—that he was so, subsidiary proofs in abundance might be adduced; among them, his extreme dislike to making one of a party of thirteen; a marked uneasiness being invariably betrayed, if by chance he found himself in that position. That his miseries consequent upon the Mauritius deficit were evidently fore-shadowed, in the course of his voyage homewards, by a visitation from the original “Flying Dutchman” he also gravely maintained. He declared that at a time when the vessel to which he had been transferred was tossing, in imminent peril of shipwreck, off the “Cape,” and when, in consequence of the hurricane that was raging, they were unable to shew a rag of canvas, he himself, together with five or six others, actually *saw* a large ship bearing down right in the wind’s eye, with all her sails set, and apparently at the distance of not more than half a mile! That she was the ill-omened wanderer of the ocean there could be no doubt. Grave gentlemen will smile at all this; but considerable reasonable indulgence is surely due, at the hands of men of *very* common sense

and somewhat inert imagination, for the fevered fancies of ardent and excitable genius.

One of his friends, who was himself suspected of a leaning that way, notes, in the following words, an instance of this weakness.

“Dined at —; we were seated twelve in number, when Hook arrived. He looked at first very black on finding himself the thirteenth, but being told that, Y—, the actor, was expected, immediately took his seat, and the evening passed off merrily enough. An anecdote was given in the course of conversation singularly corroborative of the superstition by which Hook was, clearly, at first affected. A party of twelve had just sat down, and one of the guests having observed a vacant chair, was remarking that he should hardly like to be the person destined to occupy that seat, when a tremendous double rap was heard,—the door was thrown open, and *Mr. Fauntleroy** announced,—he was hanged within the year!”

* Another story was at the same time told in connection with this unfortunate gentleman. A Mr. R—, a wine-merchant was very intimate with Fauntleroy, and with a few friends was in the habit of dining with him frequently. On these occasions, when the party was not too large, the host would produce some very choice old Lunelle wine, of which R— was exceedingly fond, but Fauntleroy could never be prevailed upon to say where he got it, or how it could be obtained. When the latter was under sentence of death, his old associates visited him repeatedly, and at their last interview, the night before his execution, R—, after having bid him farewell with the rest, on a sudden paused in the prison passage, returned to the cell, and said in a low voice to the criminal,—“You ’ll pardon my pressing the subject, but now at all events, my dear friend, you can have no objection to tell me where I can get some of that Lunelle.”

To the "Christmas Box" (1828), a tiny annual for children—of every growth, Theodore Hook contributed a very forcible exposition of the perils of the Paronomasia or Pun, and upon the principle, we suppose, that—

"He best can paint them, who shall feel them most,"

we have them very clearly depicted, for the benefit of little punnikins at school, in the following—

"CAUTIONARY VERSES TO YOUTH OF BOTH SEXES.

"My readers may know that to all the editions of Entick's Dictionary, commonly used in schools, there is prefixed 'A Table of Words that are alike, or nearly alike, in sound, but different in spelling and signification.' It must be evident that this table is neither more nor less than an early provocation to punning; the whole mystery of which vain art consists in the use of words, the sound and sense of which are at variance. In order, if possible, to check any disposition to punning in youth, which may be fostered by this manual, I have thrown together the following adaptation of Entick's hints to young beginners, hoping thereby to afford a warning, and exhibit a deformity to be avoided, rather than an example to be followed; at the same time shewing the caution children should observe in using words which have more than one meaning.

"My little Dears, who learn to read, pray early learn to shun

That very silly thing indeed which people call a pun:
Read Entick's rules, and 't will be found how simple an offence

It is, to make the self same sound afford a double sense.

- “ For instance, *ale* may make you *ail*, your *aunt* an *ant* may kill,
 You in a *vale* may buy a *veil*, and *Bill* may pay the *bill*.
 Or if to France your bark you steer, at Dover, it may be,
 A *peer* appears upon the *pier*, who, blind, still goes to *sea*.
- “ Thus one might say, when to a treat good friends accept
 our greeting,
 'T is *meet* that men who *meet* to eat should eat their *meat*
 when meeting.
 Brawn on the *board*'s no bore indeed, although from *boar*
 prepared ;
 Nor can the *fowl*, on which we feed, foul feeding be
 declared.
- “ Thus *one* ripe fruit may be a *pear*, and yet be *pared* again,
 And still be *one*, which seemeth rare until we do explain.
 It therefore should be all your aim to speak with ample
 care ;
 For who, however fond of game, would choose to swallow
hair ?
- “ A fat man's *gait* may make us smile, who has no *gate* to
 close :
 The farmer sitting on his *stile*, no *stylish* person knows :
 Perfumers men of *scents* must be ; some *Scilly* men are
 bright ;
 A *brown* man oft *deep read* we see, a *black* a wicked
wight.
- “ Most wealthy men good *manors* have, however vulgar
 they ;
 And actors still, the harder slave, the oftener they *play* :
 So poets can 't the *baize* obtain, unless their tailors
 choose ;
 While grooms and coachmen, not in vain, each evening
 seek the *Mews*.

“The *dyer* who by *dying* lives, a *dire* life maintains ;
 The glazier, it is known, receives—his profits from his
panes :
 By gardeners *thyme* is tied, 't is true, when spring is in
 its prime ;
 But *i'me* or *tide* won't wait for you, if you are *tied* for
time.

“Then now you see, my little dears, the way to make a
 pun ;
 A trick which you, through coming years, should sedu-
 lously shun :
 The fault admits of no defence ; for wheresoe'er 'tis found,
 You sacrifice the *sound* for *sense* ; the *sense* is never *sound*.
 “So let your words and actions too, one single meaning
 prove,
 And, just in all you say or do, you 'll gain esteem and
 love :
 In mirth and play no harm you 'll know, when duty's
 task is done ;
 But parents ne'er should let ye go unpunished for a *pun* !”

It may not be unsatisfactory to our readers to see
 so important a subject treated more profoundly, and
 in prose, by the same experienced hand :—

“It would be vain, at this time of the world's age,
 to enter upon a serious disquisition into the ‘art or
 mystery’ of punning ; it would be useless to argue
 upon its *utility*, the genius and talent required for
 carrying it on, or the pleasure, or amusement deriv-
 able from it. The fact is self-evident, that puns are
 an acknowledged ingredient of the English language
 amongst the middling classes, and are, in their so-
 cieties, the very plums in the *pudding* of conversation.

“It may be said that punning is a vice, and we are quite ready to admit the charge; but still it exists and flourishes amongst dapper clerks in public offices, hangers on of the theatres; amongst very young persons at the universities; in military messes amongst the subalterns; in the city amongst apprentices; and, in some instances, with old wits *rustés*, who are driven to extravagant quibbles to furnish their quota of entertainment to the society in which they are endured.

“A punster (that is, a regular, hard-going, thick and thin punster) is the dullest and stupidest companion alive, if he could but be made to think so. He sits gaping for an opportunity to jingle his nonsense with whatever happens to be going on, and, catching at some detached bit of a rational conversation, perverts its sense to his favourite sound, so that instead of any thing like a continuous intellectual intercourse, which one might hope to enjoy in pleasant society, one is perpetually interrupted by his absurd distortions and unseasonable ribaldry, as ill-timed and as ill-placed as songs in an opera sung by persons in the depth of despair, or on the point of death.

“Admitting, however, the viciousness, the felonious sinfulness of punning, it is to be apprehended that the liberty of the pun is like the liberty of the press, which, says the patriot, is like the air, and if we have it not we cannot breathe. Therefore, seeing that it is quite impossible to put down punning, the next best thing we can do is to regulate it, in the way they regulate peccadilloes in Paris, and teach

men to commit punnery as Cæsar died and Frenchmen dissipate—with decency.

“The proverb says ‘wits jump,’—so may punsters, and two bright geniuses *may* hit upon the same idea at different periods quite unconsciously. To avoid any unnecessary repetition or apparent plagiarisms, therefore, by *these coincidences*, we venture to address this paper to young beginners in the craft—to the rising generation of witlings; and we are led to do this more particularly from feeling that the *tyro* in punning, as well as in every thing else, firmly believes *that* which he for the first time has heard or read, to be as novel and entertaining to his older friends, who have heard it or read it before he was born, as it is to himself, who never met with it, till the day upon which he so liberally and joyously retails it to the first hearers he can fall in with.

“For these reasons we propose, in order to save time and trouble, to enumerate a few puns, which, for the better regulation of jesting, are positively prohibited in all decent societies where punnery is practised; and first, since the great (indeed, the only) merit of a pun is its undoubted originality—its unequivocal novelty—its extemporaneous construction and instantaneous explosion—all puns by recurrence, all puns by repetition, and all puns by anticipation, are prohibited.

“In the next place, all the following *travelling* puns are strictly prohibited:—

“All allusions upon entering a town to the *pound* and the *stocks*—knowing a man by his *gait* and not liking his *style*—calling a tall turnpike keeper a colos-

sus of *roads*—paying the post boy's charges of *ways* and means—seeing no *sign* of an *inn* ; or, replying, sir, you are *out*, to your friend who says he does—talking of a hedger having a *stake* in the *bank*—all allusions to *sun* and *air* to a new married couple—all stuff about village *belles*—calling the belfry a *court of a peal*—saying, upon two carpenters putting up a paling, that they are very peaceable men to be *fencing* in a field—all trash about '*manors make the man*,' in the shooting season ; and all stuff about trees, after this fashion : 'that's a *pop'lar* tree—I'll turn over a new *leaf*, and make my *bough*,' &c.

"Puns upon field-sports, such as racing being a matter of *course*—horses *starting* without being shy—a good shot being fond of his *but* and his *barrel*—or saying that a man fishing deserves a *rod* for taking such a *line* ; if he is sitting under a *bridge* calling him an *arch* fellow, or supposing him a nobleman because he takes his place among the *piers*, or that he will *catch* nothing but cold, and no fish by *hook* or by crook. All these are prohibited.

"To talk of yellow pickles at dinner, and say the way to *Turn'em Green* is through Hammersmith—all allusions to eating men, for *Eton* men, *Staines* on the table-cloth,—*Eggham*, &c. are all exploded ; as is all stuff about *maids*, and *thornbacks*, and *plaice* ; or saying to a lady who asks you to help her to the wing of a chicken, that it is a mere matter of a *pinion*—all quibbles about dressing *hare* and cutting it—all stuff about a merry fellow being given to *wine* ; or, upon helping yourself, to say you have a platonic affection for roast beef ; or when fried fish runs short singing

to the mistress of the house, with *Tom Moore*—

“Your *sole*, though a very sweet *sole*, love,
Will ne’er be sufficient for me,”

are entirely banished.

“At the playhouse never talk of being a *Pittite* because you happen not to be in the boxes—never observe what a *Kean* eye one actor has, or that another can never grow old because he must always be *Young*—never talk of the uncertainty of *Mundane* affairs in a farce, or observe how *Terry*-bly well a man plays Mr. Simpson—banish from your mind the possibility of saying the Covent Garden manager has put his best *Foot* forward, or that you should like to go to *Chester* for a day or two; or that you would give the world to be tied to a *Tree*, or that *Mr. Macready* is a *presentable* actor—all such stuff is interdicted.

“In speaking of parliament, forget *Broom* and *Birch*, *Wood* and *Cole*, *Scarlett* and *White*, *Lamb* and the *Leakes*, the *Hares* and the *Hérons*, the *Cookes* and the *Bruins*; such jumbles will lead into great difficulties, and invariably end, without infinite caution, in an observation that the conduct of that House is always regulated by the best possible *Manners*.

“There are some temptations very difficult to avoid—for instance, last Saturday we saw gazetted as a bankrupt, ‘*Sir John Lade*, Cornhill, watchmaker.’ Now this, we confess, was a provocation hard of resistance. When one sees a lad of sixty-four *set up* only to *break down*, and perceives that whatever he may do with *watches*, he could not make a case before the Insolvent Debtors’ Court; and, moreover, since

his taking to watch-making, arose from his having in the *Spring* of life gone upon *tick*, and that the circumstance may be considered as a *striking* instance of a *bad wind up*; we admit that in the hands of a young beginner such a thing is quite irresistible, but such temptations should be avoided as much as possible.

“We have not room to set down all the prohibited puns extant; but we have just shewn that the things which one hears when one dines in the City, (where men eat peas with a two-pronged fork, and bet *hats* with each other), as novelties, and the perfection of good fun are all flat, stale, and unprofitable to those who have lived a little longer and seen a little more of the world, and who have heard puns when it was the fashion to commit them at the West end of the town.”—*John Bull*, 1823.

In the art of punning, whatever be its merits or demerits, Hook had few rivals and but one superior, if indeed one—we mean Mr. Thomas Hood. Among the innumerable “Theodores” on record, it will be difficult, of course, to pick out the best; but what he himself considered to be such, was addressed to the late unfortunate Mr. F—, an artist, who subsequently committed suicide at the ‘Salopian’ coffee-house for love, as it is said, of a popular actress. They were walking in the neighbourhood of Kensington, when the latter pointing out on a dead wall an incomplete or half-effaced inscription running “Warren’s B —,” was puzzled at the moment for the want of the context.

“’Tis *lacking* that should follow,” observed Hook,

in explanation. Nearly as good was his remark on the Duke of Darmstadt's brass band.

"They well nigh stun one," said he, in reference to a morning concert, "with those terrible wind instruments, which roar away in defiance of all rule, except that which Hoyle addresses to young whist players—when in doubt—*trump it!*"

CHAPTER XII.

"MAXWELL."—A PROLONGED SITTING.—MR. STEPHEN PRICE.—TRIPLING WITH AN APPETITE.—ANECDOTE.—"LOVE AND PRIDE."—MR. HOOK UNDERTAKES THE EDITORSHIP OF THE "NEW MONTHLY MAGAZINE."—"GILBERT GURNEY."—ANECDOTES.—THE GREAT MR. S.—STORY OF TOM SHERIDAN.—THE ORIGINAL OF "MR. WELLS."—"GURNEY MARRIED."—"JACK BRAG."—ANECDOTES.—PROPOSED "HISTORY OF HANOVER."—"LIFE OF CHARLES MATHEWS."

MR. HOOK'S next novel, "Maxwell" (1830), is, in point of plot, by far the most perfect of his productions; the interest which is at once excited, never for an instant flags, and the mystery, so far from being of the flimsy, transparent texture, common to romances, is such as to baffle the most practised and quick-witted discoverer of *dénouements*, and to defy all attempts at elucidation, short of the unjustifiable reference to the third volume, occasionally resorted to by invalids and readers devoid of self-control.

The hero himself is said to be intended as a sketch of an eminent dentist, but the principal portrait is one, for finish and fidelity unsurpassed, and, to the best of our belief, unequalled. The strange *mélange* of cynicism and kind-heartedness, selfishness and generosity, fascination and repulsiveness, refined tastes and sordid habits, each ingredient being genuine, and unadulterated by affectation, presented in the cha-

racter of *Godfrey Moss*, is brought out with such admirable harmony and distinctness, as to impress the reader at once with the conviction that it is no "unreal mockery" that is before him, but a veritable personage, humorous and eccentric to the very verge of credibility, but full of life and reality. The likeness carries with it that intrinsic stamp of accuracy perceptible in certain paintings, even to one unacquainted with the features of the original.

A pun on paper loses somewhat of its relish — you want it hissing hot from the intellectual furnace — like an *omelette* or *fondue*, it becomes heavy as it grows cold — but one of the most perfect after its kind, conveying, too, at one artistic stroke, the most admirable illustration of the good natured sarcasm of the man, is put into the mouth of *Godfrey*. When "Master Neddums," the son of Maxwell, the surgeon, who, to the practice of the "regular M. D., or murderer of distinction," added that of an accoucheur, is narrating, with ecstasy, an adventure, in which he has saved a lovely young girl from being run over by a carriage, in Long Acre, — he is answered by his father:—

"'And a very meritorious act, too, Ned,' said Maxwell, 'no accident *did* happen to her I hope?' 'No job for the craft,' said Moss, 'no feeling for the faculty — eh? — six and eightpence again, Kittums.' 'No, sir,' said Edward, 'she was, as they say, more frightened than hurt; but she was all gratitude to me, — and called me her deliverer.' 'Mistook you for your father, perhaps, Neddums,' said Moss."

The endearing diminutive "Kittums," by which

Godfrey here addresses *Miss Maxwell*, was that which the true man invariably applied to his old friend, Miss Stephens, the Dowager Countess of Essex.

We are tempted to give one more anecdote of this extraordinary being, especially as the subject of our memoir was himself one of the parties therein concerned. They both had been dining with the late Mr. Stephen Price, the manager of Drury-lane theatre, and as the host shewed unequivocal symptoms of indisposition—he was suffering severely from gout in the hand—the party broke up early; and all but Cannon and Hook took their leave by about eleven o'clock. Upon them every possible hint short of absolute rudeness was expended in vain; a small table had been wheeled up close to the fire, amply furnished with potations, such as they loved, and they were not to be wiled away. At length, unable to endure the increasing pain, Price quietly summoned up an inexhaustible supply of “black spirits and white,” and leaving his guests to mingle as they might, stole off unobserved to bed. Next morning, about nine, his servant entered his room.

“Well, sir,” said Price, on awaking, “pray, at what time did those two gentlemen go, last night?”

“Go, sir?” repeated the man.

“I asked ye, *sir*, at what time did Mr. Hook and Mr. Cannon go?”

“Oh, they are not gone yet, sir,” replied John, “they’ve just rung for coffee!”

Mr. Price, himself, was a man of singular and eccentric character, and would have formed an admirable subject for a portrait; under the hands of his artistic

friend, he would have become as popular as *Hull* or *Daly*, or *Godfrey Moss*; Hook neglected or postponed him: but a few, and those not the most prepossessing, of his features are said to be preserved in Mr. Poole's clever sketch of the "Pangrowlion Club;" to say the truth, his habits were, not all of them, the best adapted to the liberty, equality, and fraternity of such a society; he would stroll, for example, in heavy creaking boots, along the coffee room of the——, casting a penetrating eye, right and left, till he found some young and too easily satisfied member discussing his solitary chop.

"What have you got there, sir?" he would ask, plunging a fork into the questionable viand, and holding it up, to the indignation of the proprietor, "D' ye mean to say you can eat this thing? Waiter! d' ye call this a chop fit to set before a gentleman? Take it away, sir, and bring the gentleman another."

On one occasion his gratuitous supervision was happily anticipated.

"You need not trouble yourself, Price," exclaimed a diner, on seeing him enter the room, and throw an inquiring glance upon the table which he was occupying—"I have got," and he held up his plate, "a broiled fowl, much burned in parts, underdone in others, and no mushrooms!"

Mathews, too, if we remember right, introduced him in one of his entertainments, as the gentleman whose choler was perpetually aroused by the sweet sounds proceeding from muffin-men, sweeps, organ-grinders, and others; "It isn't that I mind his bawl-

ing about the streets, but then, sir, the man has a r'-right to do it ! ”

Mr. Price was an American by birth, and a proficient, it is said, in the national accomplishment—duelling; in this country he was more favourably known as a *bon vivant* of taste, and a giver of bachelor dinners of a high order; he was, moreover, the first promulgator of one of those Transatlantic beverages, which are justly the admiration of the curious. It is a species of punch, in which gin, maraschino, and iced soda water, are blended in a certain occult and scientific way, and is esteemed of sovereign worth in very hot weather, or in cases where an obstinate and unaccountable thirst has somehow survived the repeated efforts made to quench it the preceding day.

Hook, one afternoon succeeding a banquet at the Freemason's Tavern, where the port had been particularly fiery or the salmon had disagreed with him, happened to drop in at the Club, and found the mighty master with an amphora of his potent elixir before him—the former was with some difficulty,—probably no great deal,—induced to give an opinion as to its merits; but it was a matter not to be decided lightly, and some half dozen pints of the beguiling compound were discussed ere the authoritative “*imbibatur*” went forth. In the evening, at Lord Canterbury's, Hook was observed to eat even less than usual, and, on being asked whether he was unwell, replied—

“Oh no, not exactly; but my stomach won't bear trifling with, and I was foolish enough to take a biscuit and a glass of sherry by way of luncheon.”

But it required a head stronger even than Theo-

dore Hook's—and it would be no easy task to point out the particular pair of shoulders that carried it—to stand proof in every instance against these midday “triflings.” We can vouch for one extraordinary scene in which Hook figured, that owed its origin to a similar pre-prandial indiscretion. The dinner, at which he was afterwards engaged, was a public one, and connected with some literary object ; for a considerable time all went on as it commonly does on such occasions ; gentlemen “charged their glasses,” the regular toasts were proposed, drunk with the usual enthusiasm, and responded to by individuals unaccustomed, as ever, to public speaking. At length, the prescribed list being exhausted, one of the stewards, slightly acquainted with Mr. Hook, but who was, or had been, on terms not the most cordial with him, rose nevertheless, and, calling the attention of the company to the presence of the eminent visitor, proceeded to give his health in a very flattering speech.

The toast was naturally received with unanimous approbation, and people began to quit their tables and to crowd round the spot where the great wit was seated—all on the tip-toe of expectation for the facetious reply. Hook rose with an air of unusual sternness—his unlooked for aspect itself elicited immediately a handsome round of applause—and, darting around glances full of ire and indignation at the gathering crowd, he commenced his reply, in terms not the most complimentary, to what, under the circumstances, he considered the *liberty* that had been taken with his name.

Louder and louder grew the laughter as the speech went on,—each sentence betraying an increase of warmth;—the simulation was admirable—the turn so very original and unexpected,—and a deafening clattering of glasses, on the part of the audience, marked their nice appreciation of the jest.

Those in his immediate vicinity soon became aware of the genuine exacerbation of the speaker, who was now lashed into a perfect frenzy; every attempt was made to appease him, but, for some time, in vain; meanwhile, the real nature of the *fun* they had been so rapturously enjoying, began to be made manifest to those who stood next in propinquity, and at last became known throughout the room; and during the confusion which ensued, Hook was prevailed upon to resume his seat. Ample apologies were dispatched on the following morning to the proper quarters, more especially to the gentleman who had been the means of introducing him on the occasion. “He had never in his life been so completely thrown off his guard—it was all owing to one of those ‘confounded’ glasses of sherry at the ——.”

But, notwithstanding the round of gaiety and pleasure in which the greater number of his evenings were spent, the time so employed cannot be said to have been altogether wasted; for, to a writer who has to draw from life, whose books are men and women, and to whom the gossip and *on dits* of the day are the rough material of his manufacture, a constant mixing in society of every accessible rank is absolutely necessary—to one of his taste and discrimination, the higher the grade the better. Whithersoever he went,

he carried with him not only an unfailing fund of entertainment, but also unslumbering powers of observation that served to redeem, what otherwise would have appeared mere weakness and self-indulgence. And that he was not slow to avail himself of the advantages that fell to his share, no one will deny who casts a glance over the list of productions he gave to the world, during a period when the intellectual exertion of his convivial hours alone would have exhausted the energies, physical and mental, of well-nigh any other man.

In 1832, he published the "Life of Sir David Baird," two vols large 8vo, a standard biographical work, and one spoken of in the highest terms of approbation by the influential Reviews of the day. So satisfied—a somewhat rare case—were the family with the manner in which he executed his task, that they presented him, in testimony of their approval, with a magnificent gold snuff-box set with brilliants, the gift of the Pacha of Egypt to the subject of the memoir. The trinket, on its arrival, is said to have been tossed without examination into a drawer, the receptacle of a hundred inconsidered trifles, from which it was happily rescued on the accidental discovery of its value and importance.

In 1833, he sent forth no less than six volumes, replete with originality and wit. A novel called the "Parson's Daughter," 3 vols. ; and a couple of stories under the title of "Love and Pride," also in 3 vols. In one of the latter, the supposed resemblance of Liston to a certain noble lord is happily turned to account ; the being mistaken for *Mr. Buggins*, princi-

pal low comedian of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, forming a light and pointed climax to the *congeries* of ridiculous miseries heaped on the unfortunate "Marquis."

The original "double" of the oddly-favoured actor alluded to, is reported to have borne the play upon his features with much greater philosophy. A good-natured friend, so runs the story, hastened eagerly to present him with an impression of the last H.B. of which—

"These two Dromios, one in semblance,"

formed the subject. So far from appearing irritated, his lordship laughed heartily at the caricature, and disavowed any ill feeling towards the artist who had taken the liberty and the likeness.

"Ay," replied his informant, "it may be a matter of no importance to you, but I understand Liston is deucedly annoyed!"

In 1836, Mr. Hook undertook the editorship of the "New Monthly Magazine," at a salary of 400*l.* per annum, exclusive of the sums to be paid for original contributions. Here he commenced his "Gilbert Gurney," accommodating himself to the exceedingly uncomfortable practice, now all but universal among popular and prolific novelists, of delivering his tale by monthly instalments. One of his last letters, addressed to Mr. Poole, a fellow contributor to the pages of "The New Monthly," was in deprecation of this plan, which is not only wearisome to the reader, but positively fatal to any thing like fair development of plot.

Of all his works, we must not limit the assertion to those of fiction, for it scarcely comes within that category, "Gilbert Gurney" is by far the most mirth-provoking and remarkable. His own adventures form the ground-work of the comedy; himself and his friends figure as the *dramatis personæ*, and throughout the whole there appear an unrestrained expression of private feelings, and a frequency of personal allusion, that give it the semblance, and almost the interest of true history. In casting our eye over the volumes, we are at a loss to point out a single character of importance that has not its prototype, or an incident—the most incredible the most true,—that is not, in some measure, founded on fact. Of the former, his own spirit animates the two more prominent specimens, *Daly*, and *Gurney* himself; to the more volatile moiety are attributed those masqueradings and extravagances which it would have been not altogether consistent with the author's dignity to appropriate immediately; while in the career of his hero, are shadowed forth many particulars of his own position and pursuits in early life. To sundry of them,—his birth coincident with that of Byron,—his brother by seventeen years his senior,—the loss of his mother,—his introduction to literary and theatrical circles,—the Thames and Berners' Street hoaxes, &c.—we have before had occasion to advert.

There may be added, the very first *plaisanterie* of *Mr. Daly* on the river:—

" 'I say you sir,' cried the undaunted joker to a very respectable round bodied gentleman who was sitting squeezed into the stern-sheets of a skiff, floating most agreeably to

himself adown the stream, "what are you doing there? You have no business in that boat, and you know it!"

"A slight yaw of the skiff into the wind's eye was the only proof of the stout navigator's agitation. Still Daly was inexorable, and he again called to the unhappy mariner to get out of the boat.

" 'I tell you, my fat friend,' cried he, 'you have no business in that boat!'

"Flesh and blood could not endure this reiterated declaration. The ire of the cockney was roused.

" 'No business in this boat, sir? What d'ye mean?'

" 'I mean what I say,' said Daly; 'you have no business in it, and I'll prove it.'

" 'I think, sir, you will prove no such thing,' said the navigator, whose progress through the water was none of the quickest; 'perhaps you don't know, sir, that this is my own pleasure-boat?'

" 'That's it,' said Daly; 'now you *have* it—no man can have any *business* in a *pleasure-boat*. Good-day, sir. That's all.'—*Gilbert Gurney*, p. 49.

In the same manner, the "doctoring" the macaroon cakes, the substitution of the bullock for the cow, and the destruction of the reserved supper are genuine enormities actually practised upon the late Duchess of Buckinghamshire. Nor is the anecdote with which Mr. *Daly* introduces himself less authentic, although it is one in which the author, fortunately for his credit, had no personal share. It happened that an individual, an acquaintance of his youthful days, a Mr. James H——, being in some pecuniary embarrassment, positively presented himself to a tradesman, to whom he owed a considerable sum, as his own brother, and

succeeded in beguiling the unsuspecting tailor or upholsterer, into the belief that his debtor had died abroad insolvent, some trifling composition was, under that impression, readily accepted, and an acquittance in full, duly delivered. We are unable to say whether the ingenious gentleman "polished off the end of the story with any retributive facts," but in this dull country of shopkeepers, whose "imaginary paradise," as the wise and witty Canon hath it, "is some planet of punctual payment, where ready money prevails, and debt and discount are unknown," it would be no easy matter to bring together twelve good men and true, possessed of sufficient acumen to discover the excellence of the jest. They might be apt to take a less imaginative view of the transaction.

The second volume of the novel opens with a description of one of those delightful Sydenham dinners before spoken of, where round the board of the hospitable Tom Hill were wont to congregate not a few of the brightest wits and geniuses of the day,—

"A day, alas ! gone by !"

Where now may we look for the elements of a symposium such as that to which Mr. Gurney was admitted beneath the roof of the merry bachelor? Coleridge "the poet," *Tim. lege* Mat., the "actor," Barnes, "the editor," Hook, poet, actor, editor in one, together with the eccentric little host himself—all are gone ! *Duberly* alone, "the barrister," now—

"Mounted to the lunar sphere,"

yet remains. The sheriff, Hook used to say, was an imaginary character, a farcical abstraction, introduced

simply as a foil to the genuine brilliants; but the judge, subsequently depicted as presiding at the Old Bailey, will be readily recognised as a sketch, by no means overcharged, of a late functionary whose final blunder was even of a more serious nature than those attributed to him by the novelist.*

The dinner with the Worshipful Company of Toothpick Makers, in which *Mr. Hicks*, "a name dear to every Englishman," so advantageously figures, was suggested by a scene at which the late Mr. Barham, who mentioned the circumstance to Hook, was present. He had been invited by a friend to dine with the trustees of a certain charity at Canonbury House, Islington, and punctual to his appointment entered on the stroke of five. Some ten or a dozen highly respectable individuals were assembled. "Generally speaking," says *Gurney*, "they ran fat and wore white waistcoats," and a half hour was pleasantly occupied in discussing the topics of the day, and in reviving reminiscences of the last meeting. As it drew near six, there was a gradual lull in the conversation; watches were consulted, and some indistinct expressions of surprise became audible. At length Mr. Barham ventured to inquire of one of his new acquaintances, when it was probable that dinner would be served?

"He is not come, sir."

* It was no less than the allowing a prisoner to be left for execution whose pardon had come down from the Secretary of State. The error was fortunately, but by the merest accident, discovered in time to save the life of the unhappy culprit. His judge was induced to retire in consequence.

"And may I ask," pursued the inquirer, "*who* is not come?"

"*He*, sir, Mr. S—s, sir!"

"Indeed! but, I beg your pardon, pray who *is* Mr. S—s?"

"Who is Mr. S—s!" repeated the worthy trustee in astonishment; "why, my dear sir, he is *the* Mr. S—s, the *great* Mr. S—s, the great Mr. S—s of—Hill!"

With some recollection, possibly, of Lucifer's reproof, Mr. Barham forbore further question. The time wore on, and the converse "which for a while did fail," was now renewed on all sides, and Mr. S—s "was the cry." "Where is he?" — "Can't have forgotten?" "Mr. S—s never forgets." — "Can't have met with an accident?" "Mr. S—s never meets with an accident," &c. Seven o'clock struck, and no Mr. S—s, and, what was worse, no dinner!

About half-past seven, a carriage drove up, and in a few minutes a stout, affable gentleman walked leisurely into the room, rubbing his hands—not knowing, doubtless, what else to do with them, as nobody present seemed on "shaking" terms — and, after a few smiles, nods, and courteous replies to inquiries after his health, *but not one single word of apology*, he quietly remarked, that he thought "dinner ought to be ready," and, on its being announced, led the way into the hall of banquet — and so on through the next hour, did the great Mr. S——s continue to treat his obsequious friends most completely *de haut en bas*; and the free and independent Britons bowed themselves down before the millionaire, ministered to his

vanity, and endured his patronage quite as matters of course. The cloth was hardly removed, when the door opened and in bounced a red-faced gentleman, who made his way up to the great man, slapped him familiarly on the back, and exclaimed:—

“Ah, S——s, my boy — who would have thought of tumbling upon you! I have only just heard from the waiter that you were in the house — but we’ve a snug party up stairs, A—, and B—, and C—, are there, you must come and join us.”

“Dear me!” said Mr. S——s, “are they, indeed? — it’s a little awkward, but I dare say, under the circumstances, my worthy brother trustees here will excuse me — and” —

Here followed a little whispering with his right-hand neighbour — “as short as possible,” being the only words that reached the ear; after a little deliberation, that gentleman rose; regretted that Mr. S——s was compelled to quit them so very early in the evening, &c., and concluded by proposing his health, “with the usual honours.” Mr. S——s briefly responded, and then taking the arm of his friend, left the company, without further ceremony, to enjoy their wine and walnuts, so far as they could contrive to do so in his absence.

Fresh incidents, taken from real life, the results of the author’s own observation in society, meet us at every chapter, it will be sufficient to particularize two, — *Mr. Daly’s* involuntary trespass upon the “Bagwash preserves,” and the ingenious mode in which *Gilbert* is coaxed into a proposal for the hand of *Miss Harriet Wells*. Of the first adventure,

young Tom Sheridan was the hero, and although the story has been told before, yet as the following version is undoubtedly the true one, and as it has the advantage, moreover, of coming from Hook's own pen, we shall venture to repeat it:—

“He (Tom Sheridan) was staying at Lord Craven's, at Benham (or rather Hampstead), and one day proceeded on a shooting excursion, like Hawthorn, with only ‘his dog and his gun,’ on foot, and unattended by companion or keeper; the sport was bad—the birds few and shy—and he walked and walked in search of game, until, unconsciously he entered the domain of some neighbouring squire.

“A very short time after, he perceived advancing towards him, at the top of his speed, a jolly comfortable-looking gentleman, followed by a servant, armed, as it appeared, for conflict. Tom took up a position and waited the approach of the enemy.

“‘Hallo! you, sir,’ said the squire, when within half-ear-shot, ‘what are you doing here, sir, eh?’

“‘I’m shooting, sir,’ said Tom.

“‘Do you know where you are, sir,’ said the squire.

“‘I’m here, sir,’ said Tom.

“‘Here, sir,’ said the squire, growing angry, ‘and do you know where here *is*, sir?—these, sir, are *my* manors; what d’ye think of that, sir, eh?’

“‘Why, sir, as to your manners,’ said Tom, ‘I can’t say they seem over agreeable.’

“‘I don’t want any jokes, sir,’ said the squire, ‘I hate jokes. Who are you, sir—what are you?’

“‘Why, sir,’ said Tom, ‘my name is Sheridan—I am staying at Lord Craven’s—I have come out for

some sport — I have not had any, and I am not aware that I am trespassing.'

" 'Sheridan !' said the squire, cooling a little, 'oh, from Lord Craven's, eh? Well, sir, I could not know *that*, sir — I —'

" 'No, sir,' said Tom, 'but you need not have been in a passion.'

" 'Not in a passion ! Mr. Sheridan,' said the squire, 'you don't know, sir, what these preserves have cost me, and the pains and trouble I have been at with them ; it's all very well for *you* to talk, but if you were in *my* place I should like to know what *you* would say upon such an occasion.'

" 'Why, sir,' said Tom, 'if I were in *your* place, under all the circumstances I should say — I am convinced, Mr. Sheridan, you did not mean to annoy me, and as you look a good deal tired, perhaps you'll come up to my house and take some refreshment?'

" The Squire was hit hard by this nonchalance, and (as the newspapers say), "it is needless to add," acted upon Sheridan's suggestion.

" 'So far,' said poor Tom, 'the story tells for me, —now you shall hear the sequel.'

" After having regaled himself at the Squire's house, and having said five hundred more good things than he swallowed ; having delighted his host, and more than half won the hearts of his wife and daughters, the sportsman proceeded on his return homewards.

" In the course of his walk, he passed through a farm-yard ; in the front of the farm-house was a green, in the centre of which was a pond—in the pond were ducks innumerable swimming and diving ;

on its verdant banks, a motley group of gallant cocks and pert partlets, picking and feeding—the farmer was leaning over the hatch of the barn, which stood near two cottages on the side of the green.

“Tom hated to go back with an empty bag; and, having failed in his attempts at higher game, it struck him as a good joke to ridicule the exploits of the day himself, in order to prevent any one else from doing it for him, and he thought that to carry home a certain number of the domestic inhabitants of the pond and its vicinity, would serve the purpose admirably. Accordingly, up he goes to the farmer and accosts him very civilly—

“‘My good friend,’ says Tom, ‘I’ll make you an offer—’

“‘Of what, sur?’ says the farmer.

“‘Why,’ replies Tom, ‘I’ve been out all day fagging after birds, and haven’t had a shot—now, both my barrels are loaded—I should like to take home something; what shall I give you to let me have a shot with each barrel at those ducks and fowls—I standing here—and to have whatever I kill?’

“‘What sort of a shot are you?’ said the farmer.

“‘Fairish!’ said Tom, ‘fairish!’

“‘And to *have* all you kill?’ said the farmer, ‘eh?’

“‘Exactly so,’ said Tom.

“‘Half a guinea,’ said the farmer.

“‘That’s too much,’ said Tom. ‘I’ll tell you what I’ll do—I’ll give you a seven shilling piece, which happens to be all the money I have in my pocket.’

“‘Well,’ said the man, ‘hand it over.’

“The payment was made—Tom, true to his bargain, took his post by the barn door, and let fly with one barrel, and then with the other, and such quacking and splashing, and screaming and fluttering, had never been seen in that place before.

“Away ran Tom, and, delighted at his success, picked up first a hen, then a chicken, then fished out a dying duck or two, and so on, until he numbered eight head of domestic game, with which his bag was nobly distended.

“‘Those were right good shots, sir,’ said the farmer.

“‘Yes,’ said Tom, ‘eight ducks and fowls were more than you bargained for, old fellow—worth rather more, I suspect, than seven shillings—eh?’

“‘Why, yes,’ said the man, scratching his head—‘I think they be, but what do I care for that—*they are none of them mine!*’

“‘Here,’ said Tom, ‘I was for once in my life *beaten*, and made off as fast as I could, for fear the right owner of my game might make his appearance—not but that I could have given the fellow that took me in, seven times as much as I did, for his cunning and coolness.’”

The *Mr. Wells* before alluded to was intended for a late eminent divine who held a prebendal stall in—Cathedral; of the accuracy of the portrait we know nothing, but in the scene of courtship, if so it may be called, the fiction certainly appears to fall short of the reality. Hook, indeed, used to declare, that though by no means deficient in the quality of

assurance, he felt himself and all that he had done thrown completely into the shade, by the consummate coolness of the rev. gentleman alluded to. In him this might have been mere modesty—

“It is the witness still of excellency,
To put a strange face on its own perfection,”

but inferior minds must regard with feelings of intense admiration, the conception and execution of the worthy prebend's matrimonial *coup*.

A young friend, also a clergyman, who was staying at his house, and dreaming as much of becoming a bishop as a Benedict, happened to be sitting up one night engaged in reading, after the family, as he supposed, had retired to rest. The door opened, and his excellent host re-appeared in dressing-gown and slippers—

“My dear boy,” said the latter, seating himself and looking pathetically at his guest, “I have a few words to say—don't look alarmed, they will prove agreeable enough to *you*—rely upon it. The fact is, Mrs. — and myself have for some time observed the attention which you have paid to Betsy; we can make every allowance, knowing your principles as we do, for the diffidence which has hitherto tied your tongue, but it has been carried far enough; though in a worldly point of view, Betsy of course might do better, yet we have all the highest esteem for your character and disposition—and then our daughter—she is very dear to us, and, where her happiness is at stake, all minor considerations must give way. We have therefore, after due deliberation,—I must own,

not altogether without hesitation, made up our minds to the match. What must be, must be; you are a worthy fellow, and therefore, at a word, you have our free and cordial consent: only make our child happy, and we ask no more."

The astonished divine, half petrified, laid down his book. "My dear sir," he began to murmur, "here is some dreadful mistake—I really never thought—that is, I never intended—"

"No, no, I know you did not; your modesty, indeed, is one of those traits which have made you so deservedly a favourite with us all; but, my dear boy, a parent's eyes are sharp — anxiety sharpens them,— we saw well enough what you thought so well concealed. Betsy, too, just the girl to be so won! Well, well, say no more about it—it is all over now, God bless you both, only make her a good husband—here she is. I have told Mrs. — to bring her down again, for the sooner young folks are put out of suspense the better. Settle the matter as soon as you like, we will leave you together."

Thus saying, the considerate papa bestowed a most affectionate kiss upon his daughter, who was at this juncture led into the room by her mother, both *en deshabille*, shook his future son-in-law cordially by the hand, and with a—"There, there, go along Mrs. —," hurried his wife out of the room, and left the lovers (?) to their *tête-à-tête*. What was to be done? common humanity, to say nothing of politeness, demanded nothing less than a proposal; it was tendered accordingly, and we need scarcely add, very graciously received.

A sequel to "Gurney" was published in the pages

of the "New Monthly," and afterwards collected into a single volume. Two evening guns, however, are equally objectionable with two morning; the story was very fairly wound up with the hero's marriage, and it was hardly advisable to append a second *dénouement*.

The main feature of the continuation is the further development of the character of *Nubley* in whom many of its readers will have no difficulty in recognising the late excellent but eccentric Lord Dudley and Ward. Instances of that nobleman's extraordinary absence of mind, and particularly of a habit so rarely indulged in, except upon the stage, of confiding the most secret resolves in very audible whispers to those around, might be quoted *ad infinitum*—thus when suffering on one occasion from the annoyance—it was his whim to consider it such—of having a companion in his carriage—he began to mutter aloud after a considerable interval of sulky silence:

"What a bore! I ought to say something, I suppose. Perhaps I had better ask him to dinner. I'll think about it."

The other laughed, and entering into the joke, replied in precisely the same tone, "What a bore! suppose he should ask me to dinner, what should I do? I'll think about it."*

* Thus Mr. Nubley:—"Here he stared and fixed his eyes upon me, and began to pick the stubble hair out of his chin, with a short, sharp sort of a jerk. He sat so occupied for about a minute, when he began to think.—"Umph! knew his father—foolish man—not quite so ugly as Cuthbert—don't think he'll ever come to good in the House. I'll see!"

"Jack Brag," three vols., followed in '86; and here again the author hit upon a character with which he could go to work *con amore*. Vulgar, vain and impudent, a cross between a tallow-chandler, and what in the cant of the day is termed a sporting *gent*, a hanger on upon the loose branches of the aristocracy, and occasionally thrown into society more respectable, Mr. Bragg's *gaucheries* convulse the reader; while those who scorn not to read a warning even on the page of a novel, may be led to devote more than a passing thought to the folly (to say the least of it) of indulging in the very silly and very common habit of perpetual though petty misrepresentation, as regards their means and position in life, and the nature and degree of their acquaintance with individuals of a rank higher than their own. There is no lower depth of drawing-room degradation than is involved in the exposure of one of these pretenders; unrecognised, perhaps, by his "most intimate friend" Lord A—, cut by his "old crony," Sir John B—, or never "heard of" by his "college chum," the Bishop of C—.

London would, of course, supply plenty of sitters for such a portrait as that of "Jack Brag," but Hook is said to have kept pretty steadily in view the features of one particular specimen of the *genus*—a certain metropolitan sportsman, found frequently at the cover side in Surrey and elsewhere. It happened that the two met on one occasion at the house of Mr. Murray, the publisher; an awkward *rencontre*, in alluding to which a few days afterwards, Hook asked his friend how he could permit such an underbred cockney to

cross his threshold? "I have just parted with him," was the reply; "and he was equally curious to learn how I ventured to admit into my family such an impertinent caricaturist as yourself."

Other characters, besides that of the hero, are probably taken from the life; the Dover exquisite for instance, young *Gunnersbury*, we suspect to be a genuine sketch from the "Marine Parade." The incidents also, as in the preceding tales, are far from being purely imaginary. The artifice of paying a trifling sum into the hands of a gentleman's banker, for the purpose of bringing up his balance to the amount of a bill about to be presented, was actually resorted to in a certain case by the holder of the security. Nor are the circumstances of Mr. *Brag's* disappointment very dissimilar from what once happened to the author himself. Believing that a note of hand which he had given to his wine merchants, was to become due on a particular day, he called at their house of business, and requested as an especial favor that the draught might be kept back for a short time, when he should be better able to meet it. This was readily promised by one of the partners; but he observed, as Mr. Hook was taking his leave, that the latter appeared unusually dull and out of spirits.

"Yes! I confess I am," replied Hook, "I am harassed by money matters; I have received this morning an intimation from Herries's people that my account with them is overdrawn, whereas I confidently reckoned upon having a considerable balance in hand."

The facts turned out to be, that the term of the bill

which he was so anxious to prolong had expired two or three days before, and that on being duly presented by one of the senior members of the firm, it had been a little perhaps to his astonishment, and after some demur among the clerks, paid. Hence the unlooked absorption of all Theodore's stock of loose cash, and the disagreeable billet from Messrs. Herries!

The success of "Jack Brag" was such as in the author's judgment to warrant the production of a "Sequel," to which he would probably have lent his name as editor. He thus addresses Mr. Bentley on the subject.

"Fulham.

"DEAR SIR,

"I will attend to your note, and take good heart and work accordingly. I send you herewith a novel of a *novel* character, which I think would make a hit if done directly: it is "The Adventures of Jack Brag after he joined the Legion in Spain," to which I send him at the end of my history. The point of the work and its object is the disclosure of much of the proceedings of the Legion; the characters introduced are portraits, and blended with the humorous parts would no doubt be very attractive. Its correctness geographically is unquestionable, it being from the pen of an officer of the Legion itself; I believe you are acquainted with the author's name through other works—Major ——. I wish you would look over it, and the sooner you come to a decision the better, as Major — leaves England on the 20th.—Believe me, &c.

"T. E. HOOK."

That the vicissitudes of the Spanish Legion would, in the hands of the gallant *αὐτόπτης*, supply ample materials for a very entertaining work we have no doubt; but our protest has already been entered against those literary monsters, stories with two tails; a bi-caudal pacha may possibly be a very agreeable companion,—it is not so with a book, especially when the cumbrous appendage happens to be tacked on by a stranger. The publisher seems to have acted upon this opinion in the present instance, and the project fell to the ground.

“Jack Brag” was followed, in 1839, by “Births, Marriages, and Deaths,” which, notwithstanding its infelicitous title,—as far as fitness goes, it might as well have been called “Law Notices,” or “Fashionable Intelligence,” or by other newspaper name,—was a novel of a higher class than any he had before attempted; the humour is scantier and more subdued than heretofore, and though the magnificent *Colonel Magnus*, and his rascally attorney *Brassey*, here and there afford admirable sport, the latter, with his economical wardrobe, to wit:—“one tooth-brush twisted up in a piece of whitey-brown paper; a razor by itself razor, tied with a piece of red tape to a round pewter shaving-box, (enclosing a bit of soap,) with the tip of its handle peeping from the bottom of a leathern case, like the feet of a long-legged Lilliputian sticking out of his coffin; a remarkably dirty flannel underwaist-coat, edged with light blue silk and silver; one pair of black silk socks, brown in the bottoms,” &c.—yet the general effect is heavy, heavier that is, than the public were inclined to accept from the pen of Theo-

dore Hook. The reduced sum of 600*l.* was paid for the copyright, but the work did little more than cover its expenses.

This, in point of fact, may be considered his last finished work. "Precepts and Practice," appeared in 1840,—the name an obvious plagiarism, and from himself, being merely a collection of short papers and tales, published during the preceding year or two, in the "New Monthly," of which he was the editor. As for "Fathers and Sons," portions of which appeared in the same magazine, together with "Peregrine Bunce," we believe neither of them to have been completed by his own hand; of the latter about one hundred pages were supplied by another writer.

The story of "Peregrine" was suggested in the course of a conversation with Mr. Barham; mention being made of one of his early Cambridgeshire school-fellows. Hook, in an instant, assumed the manner and almost the features of an individual of whom he had lost sight for above forty years; and a relation of this gentleman's wife-hunting adventures,—the prize invariably snatched away when all but within his grasp, his gradual depreciation in the matrimonial market, the fall of his pretensions from twenty thousand pounds to ten and five, and his ultimate capture by a cleverer speculator than himself,—induced his old acquaintance to take him for a hero of which he happened to be in want. The *Rev. Slobberton Mawks*, a subordinate sketch was also, with some exaggeration it is to be hoped, furnished from actual survey.

To these works may be added the "Reminiscences

of Michael Kelly," an agreeable olio of anecdote musical and theatrical, ranging over a period of half a century, which we are told, Mr. Hook, "from motives of pure kindness re-wrote, that is to say, composed from rough illiterate materials;" the style and dialogue are pointed up and an occasional reflection, betraying *ex pede Herculem*, is introduced, but the staple of the two volumes is the genuine experience of the veteran himself. Of a somewhat similar character is "The French Stage," an adaptation from M. Fleury, edited by Hook in 1841, a work which we believe attracted little notice, and to which he contributed but a few good-humoured and jocular notes. He had previously translated the "Pascal Bruno," of Dumas.

There can be no need at this day, to enter upon any lengthened criticism of Theodore Hook's merits as a novelist, they have been discussed over and over again, with little variety of opinion by every reviewer in the kingdom. Indeed, both his faults and his excellences lie on the surface, and are obvious and patent to the most superficial reader: his fables for the most part ill-knit and insufficient, disappoint as they are unfolded; repetitions and omissions are frequent; in short, a general want of care and finish is observable throughout, which must be attributed to the hurry in which he was compelled to write, arising from the multiplicity, and distracting nature of his engagements. His tendency to caricature was innate, but even this would probably have been in a great measure repressed, had he allowed himself sufficient time for correction. While on the

contrary, in detached scenes which sprang up as pictures in his mind replete with comic circumstance, in brilliant dialogue and portraiture of character, not to mention those flashes of sound wisdom with which ever and anon his pages are lighted up, his wit and genius had fair play, revelling and rioting in fun, and achieving on the spur of the moment those lasting triumphs which cast into the shade the minor and mechanical blemishes to which we have adverted.

A comparison seems almost to force itself upon our notice, between the writings of Hook and those of a still more popular author, Mr. Charles Dickens. We shall not be tempted to pursue it further than to remark, that their subject-matter being in some measure the same, the former seems to survey society from a level more elevated and more distant than his competitor; his delineations are in consequence general and sketchy, those of the latter more technical and minute. Hook gives you a landscape, while "Boz" is tracing every leaf of a particular tree. The same analogy holds good as regards their moral teaching. Hook is pithy, pointed, and off hand; the reflections of Mr. Dickens are elaborated, with a care that occasionally, perhaps, detracts from their effect. Hook has undoubtedly the advantage of a more varied experience of the world, but the palm of originality must, we should think, be awarded to his rival.

One more observation and we have done. In the management of a dinner party, Hook is certainly unapproachable; we have them of every possible grade, from the *chef-d'œuvre* of a *cordons bleu*

to the humble effort of the maid-of-all-work, with company to match. Not a story is without one, and yet there is no repetition, each will be found appropriate and distinctive: they rank among his principal agents in developing character, and winding up his plots. Nor is there any thing remarkable that a man should select for those purposes, scenes in which he is perfectly at home, and which, indeed, comprise his own particular sphere of action; the only strange part of the business is, that he should have been doing so, unconsciously all the while, and have never observed the habitude till it was pointed out to him by another. He defends it upon what must be admitted to be full and sufficient grounds:—

“Nothing,” he says, “can be more just or true than the axiom, that no man knows himself. I was not conscious of this peculiarity until it was pointed out to me by a stranger. The moment it was noticed, I looked back at as many of my ‘narratives’ as I could lay hold of at the time, and, sure enough every important event occurs at ‘dinner’ or ‘supper.’ I have before noticed this just conclusion, and I have defended it, as I must again, upon the plain and undeniable fact, that it is *at* and *after* dinner or supper (more especially when the supper comes late, after a ball), that all the pleasurable business of society is transacted, and that the bashful Englishman, and the timid Englishwoman are never so much at their ease, as when they are sitting round a table; and, moreover, that the table in question, whether one eats and drinks or not, is, and must be, the *point de réunion* of every

circle every day in the week, whether in London or in a country-house."

A few years before his death, Mr. Hook contemplated a work of a more important nature than any he has given to the public — no less than a History of Hanover; and in which, to judge from the promise of speedy publication, put forth in the "Prospectus," he must have made considerable progress; but whether he would ever have found time, or even patience, for the research and labor necessarily involved in such an undertaking, is doubtful. It is as well, perhaps, for his literary fame that the design was left incomplete, or, as we suspect, altogether abandoned.

Of far richer promise was the "Life" of his old associate, Charles Mathews, the first chapter of which — all he ever wrote — is before us, and for which he was to have received five hundred pounds. A difference of opinion arising between the family and himself, respecting the proposed length of the "Memoirs," he recommending two, they contending for three volumes, he resigned the task into hands, certainly proved by the result, fully competent for its performance. That for once, his more experienced judgment was in error, and his foresight less keen than that of persons more interested, appears from the success that has attended the work in a form still more extended.* That Theodore Hook would have produced a masterly and brilliant book — one which would have added, in no little degree, to his own reputation, and surpassed, perhaps, any thing of the kind in existence

* It is published in four large octavo volumes.

— his introductory pages go far to testify. But it must be admitted, that as an amusing record of theatrical men and manners, and a minute exposition of the genius and eccentricities of her husband, Mrs. Mathews has left little to be desiderated.

CHAPTER XIII.

MR. HOOK REMOVES TO CLEVELAND ROW. — HIS LOSSES AND EMBARRASMENTS.—HIS RETURN TO FASHIONABLE LIFE.—ANECDOTES.—MR. BARHAM'S RECOLLECTIONS OF HOOK.—HIS RETREAT AT FULHAM.—LETTER.

THE great success of Mr. Hook's first novels and the large sums they brought him in proved indirectly, as is too often the case with literary men, the cause of much of his subsequent embarrassment; his better judgment was completely dazzled by the prospect that appeared to open; he seemed to think that by virtue of his pen, an almost unlimited income was placed at his command, and he launched out accordingly into expenses, and adopted a style of hospitality that induced the most disastrous consequences. His first step was to give up, in 1827, his moderate establishment at Putney, and hire a large and fashionable mansion in Cleveland-row, belonging to his friend, Lord Lowther, but in the hands, at that time, of the late Captain Marryat. For this he paid 200*l.* a year, and immediately laid out between two and three thousand pounds in furniture and decorations — accepting bills for the amount, and trusting to the returns from the "John Bull" and other publications for the wherewith to meet them. This was his great error, and one which no amount of exertion sufficed

to repair. Ready money became scarce, supplies were to be raised at any cost, his account with the paper was overdrawn, and the patience of his coproprietors exhausted; fresh engagements were, in consequence, entered into, and advances obtained from the publishers.

And here we may take the opportunity of observing that in his transactions with these gentlemen, that is to say, with Messrs. Bentley and Colburn, with whom he was principally concerned, he appears to have been treated with marked consideration and liberality; such most surely is apparent from the uniform tenour of his own declarations, throughout a correspondence extending over many years, and referring to a complicity of literary engagements — made, modified, fulfilled, and cancelled, in ready, it might be almost said indulgent, acquiescence with his wishes. It would not have been necessary to advert to the circumstance at all, but from the fact that some unguarded expressions let fall in certain published sketches of his life, would lead to the supposition that advantage was taken, by the parties in question, of Mr. Hook's embarrassments. As it is, let him speak himself. We quote from two letters, bearing date respectively, 1830 — and 1839 — being about the first and the last of the series before us:—

“Assure yourselves that I do this with great pain, because, as I have always said, and say still, *I have been so liberally treated by your house, that it seems almost presuming upon kindnesses,*” &c. Again: “I assure you I would not press the matter in a quarter where, *I am proud and happy to say—as I do to every*

body—I have met with the greatest liberality, but it is of vital consequence to me, and would put me at my ease to do my business with a cheerful mind and a light heart.”

This testimony, capable of manifold corroboration from the same source, will probably be deemed sufficient. Both the letters obviously refer to the involved state of his finances, and in a third, application for an advance of money is made, under feelings of excitement still more intense, and the result of a refusal hinted at, in terms the most gloomy and significant.

The proceeds of his intellectual resources being thus mortgaged and forestalled, and his energies, in consequence, withdrawn from the “Bull,” in favor of more pressing claimants, the sale of the paper, together with his clear profit of two thousand a year, began rapidly to sink. Straitened and reduced, he remained, nevertheless, for a time unwilling to retrench; there was but one alternative, and he became speedily entangled in the meshes of usurers and bill-discounters, and all the obscene tribe of vampires that feed on the extravagant and necessitous. It is not, however, without a feeling of satisfaction, that we are enabled to trace much of the pecuniary distress in which he became so early and apparently so inexplicably involved, to the imprudence or ill fortune of others. In 1831, we find him soliciting advances from his publishers, on the ground of a “loss of upwards of 1,500*l.*, sustained during the year, by the bankruptcy of two or three friends.” His connection with one firm, in particular, plunged him into sudden and considerable difficulty; he had undertaken the

editorship of some literary speculation, and had received large sums — in paper — on account, most of which had been paid into the hands of his upholsterers, when the failure of the house, just as these bills were becoming due, entailed upon him, quite unexpectedly, the necessity of finding the money to meet them.

A temporary relief was obtained by the sale of a moiety of his share in the "John Bull," for which he received four thousand pounds, but at the sacrifice, of course, of a considerable portion of his annual income, and with the almost certain prospect of increasing embarrassment.

Meanwhile a very considerable change had been brought about in his external position; he had completely emerged from the obscurity into which prudence, if not necessity, had driven him on his return from the Mauritius; again the great and gay smiled upon him, and though no longer the slim, handsome, curly-headed youth that captivated and delighted as much by his prepossessing appearance as by his precocious talents, he was sought after by lords and ladies who had a dinner to give, or a Christmas party to arrange, with greater pertinacity than ever. In a word, Theodore Hook may be said to have won the singular distinction of being raised twice from that middle class, which without offence may be termed the "ranks" of society; a reiteration of promotion as rare in the fashionable as in the military world. His misfortunes had thrown, it may be, something of interest around him, and his high reputation as an author, attracted favourable attention; with some po-

litical partizans his connexion, now tacitly admitted, with the above mentioned journal would have no little weight, but his rapid rise, once from obscurity, once from a point even less favourable, must in the first and highest degree be attributed to his unrivalled powers of entertainment, and to the fascination that hung upon his lips, unclogged by any drawback on the score of temper or deportment. As was said of Sheridan, he had no ancestry, no wealth, no patron to recommend him, others stood or rose upon the basis of something which was external as well as tangible and recognised, Theodore Hook stood upon the strength and fame of his own talents alone.

Mr. Hook now became a constant guest at the tables of the nobility, Whig as well as Conservative, and not unfrequently an inmate of their country seats.* At Hatfield House, for example, where he provided "Private and Confidential Dramas" for the admirers of amateur theatricals, at the late Lord Canterbury's, Sir Robert Peel's, &c., he was occasionally received; and, what perhaps may strike the reader as a little strange, Sir Francis Burdett is to be included among those who flattered him with their notice.

It was at the first named of these houses that he is said to have attracted the attention of Lady Salisbury, by a succession of bows made without any apparent

* The constant attention demanded by "Bull" prevented these visits being prolonged. On *one* occasion, when staying for about a month at Lord Canterbury's, he was compelled to hold regular conferences with Mr. Edward Shackel, one of those employed on the paper, who attended him weekly at an inn in the neighbourhood, for that purpose.

object during the whole course of dinner. The lady ventured, at last, to ask an explanation of behaviour so eccentric.

"The fact is," replied Hook, "I have been accustomed all my life to those social recognitions at table, which are now interdicted by fashion; and, as I can't quite get out of the habit, I usually 'take wine' with the epergne and bow to the flowers."

At Ham, the residence of the Countess of Dysart, he was presented to the present King of Hanover, who subsequently received him at Kew, and proved always a warm and sincere friend.

Hook used to give an amusing account of one of his interviews with his Royal Highness, imitating his tone and manner with most grotesque fidelity. The Duke had just arrived from town, and on approaching the window, was struck with horror and indignation at the appearance, in most offensive proximity to the palace, of what seemed the chimney of some new factory erected on the opposite side of the river, during his absence. Volumes of thick black smoke were drifting across the lawn, poisoning the air, and making the afternoon "hideous." After anathematizing most royally the Brentfordians, and consigning them to a locality more disagreeable, if possible, than the one they at present occupy, he sent Colonel — to make a nearer examination of the nuisance. The Duke's relief may be imagined, when it was ascertained that the supposed gas or glass-house abomination, was nothing but the funnel of an unfortunate steamer, chartered by "brother Brown," and conveying a cargo of pious (eel-pye-house, Hook called them)

holiday folks, which had run aground on the shallows opposite the gardens, in its return from Twickenham.

About this time, also, Mr. Hook became a member of many of the clubs which were then beginning to spring up, like mushrooms, in the western hemisphere of London — those dangerous resorts of the idle and discontented, who relieved from the restraints imposed by female society, for there —

“more sinistro

Exagitata procul non intrat femina limen—”

are thus encouraged to indulge in all sorts of post-prandial extravagancies. He was admitted at the “Athenæum,” “Crockford’s,” “the Carlton,” and was, some years afterwards, one of the original members and promoters of the “Garrick.”

Agreeable as the mixing in this society must have been to one doomed so long to a most uncongenial seclusion, — flattering as his warm reception must have proved to his vanity, and especially soothing to those feelings of wounded self-respect under which he was labouring, they were luxuries not to be obtained but at an expenditure of time—to him money, his sole inheritance—which tended proportionably to increase his difficulties. Nor did the evil stop here; loss of time and prostration of mental powers were not the only, nor the worst results of his new associations. Temptations to indulge in high play were constantly occurring, and were but too feebly resisted. And yet, few men ever entered into this perilous field with surer certainty of loss than Theodore Hook; he seemed to possess not one of the

elements of success ;—in place of the cool head, undivided attention, and temperate regimen of the professional gamester, a thousand brilliant conceits were thronging his brain and engaging his thoughts, and diverting his eye from the game before him—even in respect of his potations he was placed at disadvantage; leaving feebler stimulants to lighter hearts and stronger stomachs, he was compelled, especially during the later portion of his life, to feed the glowing flame with ardent spirits. It necessarily followed that he constantly rose a severe loser from the table, where his gaiety, heedlessness, and limited resources had been waging unequal war with perfect impassibility of temperament, profound knowledge of the chances, and an inexhaustible exchequer.

No man knew human nature better than he—no man perhaps knew himself better: in the case of another, he would have been the keenest to detect, and the ablest to expose the inevitable consequences of such a course; he would have perceived, moreover, how agreeable to the “bank” would be the attendance of a man of such wit and celebrity as himself, how valuable as a decoy if not as a victim; and he would have readily appreciated at a just estimate, “*the very handsome conduct and extreme liberality*” of Mr. C—d, who allowed him three years to pay off the balance that appeared against him.

That Hook, too, suffered considerably from the habitual, perhaps unconscious, rapacity of certain titled companions, seems pretty certain; that either he or his derived any solid advantage from the connection is far more problematical. And yet a man

might be named—a nobleman of boundless wealth, who had ever professed the greatest esteem and regard for him, who, by a stroke of his pen, a drop from his ocean, never to be missed or remembered, might have obliterated a world of cares from one who was positively wasting the very means of subsistence in ministering to his amusement—a man who boasted to Hook himself, that, at the close of a particular year, all bills, &c., being paid, there remained, over and above his expenditure, a surplus in his hands of 95,000*l.* that he did not know what to do with; but who, as the latter observed, would probably not have consented to expend five of them in saving his *friend* from the horrors of a jail.

An incident may be here mentioned, hardly indeed worthy of notice, except that an incorrect and injurious version was at one time in circulation. Mr. Hook had been staying a few days at a country mansion, and, on his departure, he was pressed to share the travelling-carriage of a youthful scion of the noble family he was about to leave. The pair, it seems, had managed, on the preceding evening, to secrete dice, and, by way of boxes, had borrowed a couple of chimney ornaments from one of the bedrooms; thus furnished, they proceeded to beguile the tediousness of the journey by a regular bout at hazard, which was prolonged till their arrival in town. The story got wind, with the charitable addition, that Hook had succeeded in winning a very considerable sum of his inexperienced *compagnon de voyage*; the facts, however, being, that the aforesaid young gentleman was by no means the novice that was repre-

sented; that the money lost consisted of but a few pounds; and that Hook, as usual, was the loser!

He gives, in "Gilbert Gurney," with too close a fidelity to be mistaken, a description of his own first introduction to the gaming-table; well had it been if, as with his hero, his first visit had also proved his last:—

"I must confess that, after ten minutes' sojourn in the midst of the motley group, all those alarms and prejudices which my grave friend, the justice, and my exemplary mother, had so prudently instilled into my mind, as to the horrors of gaming-houses, which, in the earnestness of their zeal for my safety, they constantly designated by a word wholly "unfitted for ears polite," had utterly and entirely subsided; I saw nothing but good humour and good fellowship. Some won their tens, and twenties, and fifties, with perfect good nature; and others lost them with equal complacency. Daly made me sit down beside him—the box came—he called a main. I did not even know the term—'Seven's the main,' said Daly; he threw again and out came eleven, upon which the gentleman in the chair, with a rake in his hand, cried out 'Eleven's a nick,' and immediately I saw my five pound note converted into a ten, by a process which appeared to me not only extremely simple but remarkably pleasant. Daly threw again, again called seven and threw nine; a loud cry of 'Five to four' rang through the room.

"'Fifty to forty,' cried one.

"'Done,' bawled another.

"'Do it in fives, Colonel,' screamed a little man very like a frog in the face, upon whose back an Irish gentleman was sitting or leaning, pushed forward by half a dozen eager spectators behind *him*.

"I heard nothing but 'Five to four' for a minute or two, varied with a counter cry of 'Nine to seven;' then a pause, broken only by the rattle of the dice, and then a call of—'Nine—the caster wins;' whereupon notes and guineas changed hands all round the outside rim of the table, and Daly swept up ten pounds as a stake, and five for his single bet."

It was during his brief residence in Cleveland Row that Mr. Hook fell in with an old College acquaintance, Mr. Barham, in whom he found to the last a very sincere friend, and, in literary matters, an honest and perhaps not altogether injudicious adviser. Mr. Barham had taken orders, and, in the discharge of his duty as one of the priests of the Chapel Royal, was a regular attendant at St. James's. Hook's house stood invitingly opposite, and they accordingly saw more of each other than, from the different circles in which they were then moving, would otherwise have been the case. Of the progress of the intimacy which ensued, and which continued uninterruptedly and with increasing cordiality until the death of the latter, there exist frequent and detailed notices in Mr. Barham's papers, who himself survived but three years. Many extracts from these "Diaries," &c. have already been laid before the public, and, in the preceding pages, we have largely availed ourselves of the information they contain relative to the subject of the present memoir. The following entries appear in his note-book for 1829, and may not be unacceptable to the reader:—

"Jan.—Called on Hook, in Cleveland Row, and found him at luncheon; I had scarcely taken a seat

when he (Hook), seeing a gentleman cross the road and hearing his rap immediately afterwards, said, 'Here comes E—, my *Gervase Skinner*,' and he prepared us for his visit by stating precisely what he would do when he entered, begging us to put down the lids of the silver beakers, in order that his visitor might, as he truly prophesied would be the case, open and peep into them both as soon as he got fairly into the room. Haynes Bayley was there that day; I found him when I entered busy discussing a devilled kidney. Hook introduced me, as it was the first time I had ever met him, by saying,

" 'Barham—Mr. Bayley—there are several of the name; this is not 'Old Bailey,' with whom you may some day become intimate, but the gentleman whom we call 'Butterfly Bayley' (in allusion to his song, 'I'd be a butterfly,' then in the height of its popularity).

"My answer was, 'A misnomer, Hook! Mr. Bayley is not yet out of the *grub*!' The latter, who was a very gentlemanly, good-natured man, a thought dandified, forgave the impertinence, and, though we did not often meet afterwards, whenever we foregathered, we were very good friends.

"May 5.—Dined at Hook's: Lord —, Mathews, Yates, Cannon, Allan Cunningham, Professor Millington, H. T—, &c. present; Sir A. Barnard being engaged with the King, and C. Kemble ill. * * * Hook had hung black crape over Peel's picture, which was on one side of the room; and H. T— being Under Secretary of State, thought it incumbent on him to remove it. The piece of 'mourning' proved more

strongly fastened than he had anticipated, which induced Lord —— to say, on seeing him bungling at it, ‘Ah, it’s of no use, you will never be able to get him out of his *scrape*.’”

In 1831, Mr. Hook found it necessary to abandon his house in town, and to make other considerable reductions in his establishment. London, indeed, was not the place for one so fond of the pleasures of society, and who was surrounded with such perpetual and pressing temptations to indulge in them: where too, independent of the actual expenses entailed by his mode of living—and he was a profuse host as well as a constant “diner out”—his resources were crippled and contracted by the undue drain upon his time. He retired, accordingly, to a neighbourhood to which he was always attached, and which the vicinity of one or two of his oldest friends rendered doubly attractive, Fulham. Here he engaged a comfortable but unpretending villa on the banks of the river, situated between the bridge and the pleasure grounds of the Bishop of London. He was now enabled, in a great measure, to shake off the crowd of fashionable and idle intruders that had hitherto beset him, and to spend his mornings, at all events, without fear of interruption, in his library.

The latter was the *beau ideal* of a literary workshop—of moderate dimensions, but light and cheerful—hung round with choice specimens of water-colour drawing, and opening upon a small garden, jealously walled in at the sides, and sufficiently elevated in front above high-water mark, to baffle the gaze of inquisitive cockneys; but commanding one of the most

beautiful and diversified views in the vicinity of the metropolis, and supplied, on the last occasion on which we visited it, with a couple of pets in the shape of two enormous sea-gulls, who were waddling about the green turf, fat and sulky, like Napoleon at St. Helena; and over whom a magnificent canine Sir Hudson Lowe, stretched at a little distance, was, to all appearance, keeping watch and ward.

His new residence afforded occasion for the delivery of one of the best of those unpremeditated *bon mots*, which were for ever sparkling and shooting athwart his fancy. A friend, viewing Putney bridge from the little terrace that overhung the Thames, observed that he had been informed that it was a very good investment, and, turning to his host, inquired "if such were the case—if the bridge really answered?"

"I don't know," said Theodore, "but you have only to cross it, and you are sure to be *tolled*."

It must have been about this period, but Mr. Hook rarely appended to his correspondence any date, save the day of the week, that the following letter, addressed to an intimate friend resident in the neighbourhood, and shewing, as he well observes, "the *boy-ancy* of the *man*," was written; the accompanying sketch, in which those who knew him cannot fail to trace, through the caricature, something of the true lineaments of the artist, will serve at least to shew the versatile ability with which he wielded his pen:—

"MY DEAR —,

Sunday.

"I have been desired to forward the enclosed to you; having also been apprized of its contents, I beg



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to add, for my *own part*, that if your highness be pleased to accept this invitation, I (who can only travel in a close carriage) shall have great pleasure not only in calling for you in —— place, (or any other place *in* London you may appoint which perhaps may suit you better,) and taking you to Ivy Cottage,* and in bringing you back and setting you down on your return in the evening. Momus's is a pleasant and *easy* house, and the earlier you *can* go the better pleased he will be ; the later you *will* stay, the more agreeable to his hospitality : depend upon it he is a worthy man, and acts in private life better than he does upon the mimic stage. I am still extremely bad i' the knee. I should think I must look in this wise :—[*vide portrait*].

A. My bad knee.

B. My beard.

C. My crural tendon—

„ or muscle—

„ or artery—

„ or something,—as big as your fist.

D. My well leg.

E. The place where my hair was when I was young.

“The progress of my recovery is slow ; so is my own when I attempt to move ; perhaps another week may make some change for the better. Will you say everything that is kind to the lady, and believe me, &c.

“Theodore of Put-*knee*
(out of joint).”

In these pen and ink sketches, especially where he

* The residence of the late Mr. Mathews ; *Momus*, the *sobriquet* by which he was occasionally addressed.

himself formed the subject, Mr. Hook was eminently successful. His Diary, we are told, abounds in them. One, comprising a couple of back views of himself at the ages of twenty and of forty, has been engraved, and was given, we believe, in the "Life of Mathews," to whom it was addressed in a familiar letter. Such, indeed, was the facility with which he hit off likenesses of his friends, that he was at one time suspected, according to the writer in the "Quarterly," of being HB.

CHAPTER XIV.

MR. HOOK'S MODE OF LIFE.—ITS EXHAUSTING NATURE.—EXCURSIONS ON THE THAMES.—ANECDOTES.—EPIGRAM.—A RICHMOND PARTY.—THE NOBLEMAN'S BUTLER.—DISPUTES WITH THE PROPRIETORS OF "JOHN BULL."—CORRESPONDENCE WITH MR. SHACKELL.—MR. H— AND THE BOAR'S HEAD.—LETTERS.—REMARKABLE DREAM.—THE HAMBURG LOTTERY.

NOTWITHSTANDING the facilities afforded Mr. Hook by his change of residence to withdraw from those scenes of destructive excitement, which well nigh every dinner-party proved to be; and to relieve his mind, wearied and spent under severe and protracted labour at the desk, by proportionate repose, he appears, to have wanted sufficient resolution to avail himself of them; or possibly he might have been persuaded into some dim expectation of advantage to be derived from what he considered "strengthening his position."

It was indeed no longer in his power to receive his fashionable associates at home; his diminished income and the inefficiency of his *cuisine* forbade that; his hospitality was necessarily confined to a few early and valued friends of his own station in life. But, as a guest, he mingled more unreservedly than ever in the gaieties of high life: his acquaintance increased daily, till it came to include at last, as we are informed by one who possessed every means of ascertaining the fact, "numerous representatives of every rank of the

peerage—with few exceptions, all the leading politicians on the Tory side—not a few of their conspicuous opponents in both Houses—a large proportion of what most attracted notice at the time in the departments of art, literature, and science; and lastly, whatever flaunted and glittered in the giddiest whirl of the *beau monde*.”*

We may venture to supply, by way of specimen, a sketch, by no means overcharged, of one of those restless, life-exhausting days, in which the seemingly iron energies of Theodore Hook were prematurely consumed. A late breakfast—his spirits jaded by the exertions of yesterday, and further depressed by the impending weight of some pecuniary difficulty—large arrears of literary toil to be made up—the meal sent away untasted—every power of his mind forced and strained, for the next four or five hours, upon the subject that happens to be in hand—then, a rapid drive to town and a visit, first to one club, where, the centre of an admiring circle, his intellectual faculties are again upon the stretch, and again aroused and sustained by artificial means; the same thing repeated at a second—the same drain and the same supply—a ballot or “general meeting” at a third, the chair taken by Mr. Hook, who, as a friend observes, addresses the members, produces the accounts, audits and passes them—gives a succinct statement of the prospects and finances of the society—parries an awkward question—extinguishes a grumbler—confounds an opponent—proposes “a vote of thanks”

* “Quarterly Review.”

to himself, seconds, carries it, and "returns thanks" with a vivacious rapidity that entirely confounds the unorganized schemes of the minority—then, a chop in the committee-room, and "just one tumbler of brandy-and-water," or *two*, and we fear the catalogue would not always close there.

Off next to take his place at some lordly banquet, where the fire of wit is to be stirred again into dazzling blaze, and fed by fresh supplies of potent stimulants. Lady A—— has never heard one of his delightful *extempores* — the piano-forte is at hand — (we have seen it established, with *malice prepense*, in the dining-room, when he has been expected),— fresh and more vigorous efforts of fancy, memory, and application are called for — all the wondrous machinery of the brain taxed and strained to the very utmost — smiles and applause reward the exertion; and, perhaps, one more *chanson*, if he has shewn himself thoroughly i' the vein, is craved as a special favor; or, possibly, if the call has been made too early or too late, some dull-witted gentleman hints that he is a little disappointed in Mr. Hook, and the host admits that he has not been so happy as he has known him. He retires, at last, but not to rest — not to home. Half an hour at Crockford's, is proposed by some gay companion, as they quit together — we need not continue the picture; the half hour is quadrupled, and the excitement of the preceding evening is as nothing to that which now ensues—whether he rises from the table winner or loser, by the time he has reached Fulham the reaction is complete, and in a state of utter prostration, bodily and mental, he seeks his

pillow — to run, perhaps, precisely a similar course on the morrow.*

And it was amid all this stunning, distracting roar of dissipation that, harassed by pecuniary demands, perplexed by legal intricacies, and almost maddened by the thought, to quote his own words, that "he had uselessly wasted not only money to a great extent in useless things, but had also wasted the time that would have reimbursed him" — that he had to sit down, with distracted thoughts and a fevered head, to frame the clear, collected leading articles for his weekly journal; carry the hero of his forthcoming novel through half a dozen chapters of complex absurdity — racking his imagination for mirth, with anguish at his heart — or to pore over bulky parcels of dull MSS., submitted to his judgment as Editor of the "New Monthly." Little, indeed, did those who only knew Theodore Hook superficially, as the acute politician, the "lion" of the *salon*, or the laughter-stirring novelist, dream of the woe that was working beneath

* "Theodore Hook," writes a friend, "had a receipt of his own to prevent invalids from being exposed to the night air. I remember his once taking me home from a party in his cab, between four and five o'clock on a brilliant morning in July. I made some remark soon after we had passed Hyde Park Corner, about the reviving quality of the air after the heated rooms we had been in. 'Ah,' said Hook, 'you may depend on it, my dear fellow, that there is nothing more injurious to health than the night air. I was very ill some months ago, and my doctor gave me particular orders not to expose myself to it.' 'I hope,' said I, 'you attended to them?' 'O yes!' said he, 'strictly; I came up every day to Crockford's or some other place to dinner, and I made it a rule on no account to go home again till about this hour in the morning.'"

the surface! "Why," said he, "should I suffer my own private worries to annoy my friends!"

Occasional relaxation he obtained, or he must have sunk, long before he did, from sheer exhaustion. In one of his later works, laying aside, for a moment, the mask of fiction (a rare instance) he affords a passing glimpse of the sad and care-worn features it has concealed:—

"‘I have,’ says he, ‘a tolerably large, and an extremely agreeable circle of acquaintances—many people who know the world less than I do would call them friends—but still the memory of past days, and the recollection of what I *might* have been, compared with what *I am*, makes me seek at certain times the charm and comfort of solitude. I do not mean in the gloomy sense of the word, I mean the charm and comfort of being alone, free, and my own master,—uncontrolled, unchecked, and independent. This feeling—this desire to leave all gaiety—all the society in which one ordinarily moves—to cast off the world and its cares, or, as they are sometimes called, pleasures, has led me to make my annual tour, just during the period in which partridge shooting ceases to be a novelty, and pheasant shooting has not begun.’"*

One favorite employment of a day, snatched from "the world, its cares, and its pleasures," was a sauntering excursion up the Thames, ostensibly, perhaps, for the purpose of fishing;—accompanied by a single friend, he would in this manner gain a brief taste of real and refreshing enjoyment. Entertaining he could not fail to be, but his fancy and imagination were thus only kept in gentle exercise, and not stimulated to

* "Precepts and Practice," vol. iii.

pernicious exertion — in his diet, too, on these occasions, he was commonly moderate and even abstemious. Ditton was not unfrequently his resort, and his grateful muse has recorded its attractions:—

“ Give *me* a punt, a rod and line,
A snug armed chair to sit on,
Some well iced punch and weather fine,
And let me fish at Ditton ! ”

Mr. Barham's note book gives an unusually full account of one of those happy holidays ; for the satisfaction of professors and amateurs of “ The noble and delightful art of angling,” we may premise that the weather was favorable and the sport excellent:— Hook, however, though his spirits were high as ever, was far from being in good health ; indications of that internal disorganization which eventually proved fatal, had begun to shew themselves ; he complained much of cough, which, he said, they told him proceeded from the deranged state of his liver ; and he drank only a tumbler of sherry and water at dinner, which was limited to a dish of fish and a duck.

The entry, which bears date August, 1839, goes on to state — after recording some conversation relative to his private affairs — “ He mentioned that Jack Johnstone, commonly known as ‘ Irish Johnstone,’ the original *Dennis Bulgruddery*, had once played off a mischievous prank upon poor old Murray, in *Richard the Third*. Murray, who usually enacted *Henry the Sixth*, had, in that character, been killed by *Richard*, in the first act ; and being anxious to leave the theatre as early as possible, had doffed the royal hose, and

replaced them with his ordinary nankeen pantaloons ; but the exigencies of the piece requiring him to be raised partially through a trap, to speak a few lines, as his own ghost, in the 'Tent scene,' he had retained the doublet of black velvet and bugles, not intending to be raised higher than what might be sufficient to exhibit his head and shoulders above the stage. Johnstone, however, watched his opportunity, and going below, in the very middle of the royal spectre's speech, gave the winch that worked the trap-door, two or three sharp turns, thus screwing up the substantial shadow considerably above the waistband, and displaying the strange incongruity of his costume, to the admiration of the House ! The effect was irresistible, and was hailed with roars of laughter.

"Close to the 'Swan,' the house at which we had dined, is B— farm, the seat of Sir —, whose father is said to have been a hair-dresser. The house is splendidly fitted up, and in the hall is a very beautiful vase of exquisite workmanship ; Hook said, that when he and C— went to dine there one day, their host happened to meet them at the door, and, on their stopping for a moment as they passed, to admire this fine specimen of art, told them it was a fac-simile of the celebrated 'Warwick vase.'

"'Ay, so I see,' returned C—, 'and very handsome it is : but don't you think a copy of the '*Barberini*' would be more appropriate?'

"Sir — had too much sense to shew annoyance at the joke, which was certainly rather more out of place than the ornament.

"The conversation turning on the Chartist, and

on the visit they had paid St. Paul's on the preceding Sunday, for the purpose of making a grand demonstration of 'moral force,' he (Hook) observed, relative to a remark of mine, that the Marquis of Westminster had been present — that the latter had recently received an invitation from a particular friend, couched in the following terms:—

“‘DEAR WESTMINSTER,—

Come and dine with me to-morrow-week. You will meet *London, Chelsea* and the two *Parks*! — Yours, &c.’

“In the course of our fishing, we had been punted down the river opposite to Lord ——’s house, and while seated in front of it, he remarked that he used to be on very friendly terms with the noble owner; but that a coolness had lately sprung up between them, in consequence of his lordship’s having taken umbrage at the epitaph (pointed with a clever but objectionable pun) he had composed for his late brother, so unhappily notorious for the charges brought against him of false play at Whist. On seeing the present Peer out on the river fishing, Hook had received from him, instead of his usual courteous greeting, a very stiff, ceremonious bow, but determined not to notice it, he only replied:—

“‘What, my lord, following the family occupation, eh! — *punting*, I see — *punting*!’”

An impromptu of Hook’s on the same subject, ran the round of the club-houses. It will be remembered that the nobleman alluded to brought an action for defamation against certain of his accusers, which

however, he thought proper to abandon at the last moment.

EPIGRAM.

“Cease your humming,
The case is ‘on;’
Defendant’s *Cumming*,
Plaintiff’s—gone!”

Another instance of the readiness of his wit, is set down, a few days later, in Mr. Barham’s diary. “The Duke of B——, who was to have been one of the knights at the Eglinton Tournament, was lamenting that he was obliged to excuse himself, on the ground of an attack of the gout —

“‘How,’ said he, ‘could I ever get my poor puffed legs into those abominable iron boots?’

“‘It will be quite as appropriate,’ replied Hook, ‘if your Grace goes in your *list* shoes.’”*

Although now become a staid, middle-aged gentleman, his boyish love of mystification still survived, and was occasionally displayed in the course of these rural rambles; the humourists and quaint characters which are perpetually encountered in coaches, second-class carriages on railways, and “commercial inns,”—but who are not to be played upon by every pert wit—

* The reader, we fear, may be sated with this constantly recurring play upon words, but the following is too good to be omitted. When Messrs. Abbott and Egerton, in 1836, took the old Coburg Theatre (the Victoria), for the purpose of bringing forward the legitimate drama, the former gentleman asked Hook if he could suggest a new name, the old being too much identified with blue fire and broad swords to suit the proposed change of performance. “Why,” said Theodore, “as, of course, you will butcher everything you attempt, suppose you call it the *Abattoir*.”

ling and retail joker, who may think fit to be feebly facetious at his neighbour's expense, in Theodore Hook's hands yielded ample sport, without, as it is almost unnecessary to say, being pained by, or even made conscious of the operation. The steam-boat at that time afforded ample field for this kind of experimental study of men and manners, and a voyage to the Twickenham Eyott and back, which, wind and tide permitting, was to be effected in a single day, and which the merest dullard could scarcely have pronounced all barren, proved to Hook and his companions most prolific of amusement, and not altogether unproductive of profit.

One of these parties, consisting of Cannon, Hook himself, the gallant Baronet with the "collar-mark," before alluded to, and one or two others, were enjoying the warm day, the cold punch and the other delights of a Richmond excursion, when an elderly gentleman, very neatly attired, and having the air of a citizen well to do in the world, attracted by the fun that was going on, drew up his camp-stool, and with a—"No offence, I hope, gentlemen," joined in the conversation.

"Gentle dulness ever loves a joke," and the new-comer was mightily pleased with such of Hook's as he could manage to comprehend—when, for instance, Theodore informed him that they were nearing the Isle of Wight, as he saw *cows* in the distance, the old gentleman's delight exceeded all sober bounds; but it was amusing to watch the extreme gravity with which he received an anecdote told of Sir George W—.

"Sir George," said Hook, "was once obliged to put off a dinner, in consequence of the sudden death

of a relative, and sat down to a haunch of venison by himself;—while eating, he remarked to his butler that it would make an admirable hash next day—‘Yes, Sir George,’ said the man, ‘if you leave off *now*.’”

For some time the merriment of this little party ran on without a check — when suddenly the old gentleman was observed to halt in his laughter; he became, all at once, silent, reserved, and seemed to be regarding Sir —— with evident symptoms of uneasiness and perplexity. On the latter quitting his seat, which he shortly did, Hook instantly commenced :

“I observed, my dear sir, that you were looking a little suspiciously at our friend’s coat !” (Sir —— happened to be wearing the Household buttons,) “I trust you have no objection to his society?”

“Oh dear me, no ! — by no means — the fact is, I began to fear that I might have made a mistake and have intruded myself—”

“Intruded !” repeated the other, “my dear sir, you can’t be serious; our friend is certainly a very respectable man — a very superior man for his station in life — he is, as you may have guessed, from his master’s button, a butler in a nobleman’s family — and though not perhaps company” —

“Don’t say another word,” cried the old gentleman, much relieved by the explanation, “pray don’t; there is no pride about me, sir.” — an assertion which he strenuously endeavoured to enforce throughout the remainder of the voyage, by paying the most condescending attention to the baronet, who became every moment more embarrassed by the patronage he had unwittingly attracted.

It has been already remarked, that the various literary engagements into which Mr. Hook's difficulties led him to enter, precluded his devoting to the "John Bull" his entire time and talents, and, as it appears, even that share of them which the proprietors considered they had a right to expect. Gentle hints proving of no avail, a formal remonstrance was determined on, and Mr. Shackell was selected to prepare and forward it.

This gentleman had been one of Hook's most sincere and most serviceable friends; necessarily trusted with the important secret of the latter's connection with the paper, he had shewn himself, in every respect, worthy of the confidence reposed in him. He had submitted patiently to the many and harassing cares, resulting from his own more exposed position; not the least of which was the being compelled invariably to procure the money, amounting altogether to a sum exceeding four thousand pounds, which was swallowed up in fines and prosecutions; and had, in addition, constantly afforded his partner pecuniary assistance, in times of pressing need, to an extent, which, if we may judge from the tenour of the letters, &c., before us, was not always either convenient or prudent.

An appeal from one whose kindness and endurance had been so often tested, certainly merited serious attention, Hook, however, with that impatience of anything approaching to dictation, that characterized him, and with something, perhaps, of the wrong-headedness of a man who feels he is to blame, hastily assumed an angry and offensive attitude; declining a direct reply, and demanding, instead, to

know, "who were the proprietors who *goaded* you into writing your letter to me."

Some intemperate letters followed, and a disagreement ensued between these old comrades, which threatened to become permanent — when in the midst of the dispute, now beginning to run high, the intelligence reached Mr. Hook of an affliction that had just befallen his friend — the loss of an only daughter. In an instant, every injury, real or imaginary, was forgotten; every trace of anger banished from his breast, and he dispatched forthwith a note to Mr. Shackell, which, short and simple as it is, yet, as affording an indication of the writer's true-heartedness, and the natural tendency of his feelings to flow in the right channel, we transcribe :—

"Fulham, Friday, Aug. — 1836.

"DEAR S.,

"Whatever differences may arise between us on matters of business — they cease upon occasions like that which causes my writing to you to day. I have heard with deep and sincere regret of your serious loss, in which, believe me, I most truly sympathize.— I am quite aware that any thing like consolation it is vain to offer at a moment like the present, but I should be glad [to learn] how you and Mrs. Shackell are — Do not trouble yourself to think of writing, but send me word by William—and, above all, assure yourself that had I been in the slightest degree aware of the afflicting circumstances in which you must latterly have been placed, I never should have pressed you for an answer to my last letter. Believe me, &c.,

"THEO. E. HOOK."

Several letters of about the same date might be quoted, bearing reference to the bickerings and disputes which existed between Mr. Hook and the other shareholders in the "Bull," but all of which with the exception of those already alluded to, abounding with honorable evidence of the real regard which he ever entertained for his old and, it must be admitted, hardly-used ally.

One is worthy of preservation as affording, besides some remarkable expressions, glimpses of that buoyant and hopeful temper, grounded, we believe, on surer foundations than those commonly suggested, which had sustained its possessor through many a stormy day, and which never seems entirely to have deserted him. As usual, the origin of the dispute is traceable to the embarrassed state of Mr. Hook's finances. Certain plans and proposals, on the part of the latter, for the disentanglement of his affairs had been submitted by Mr. Shackell—and not improperly, so far as we can see, to the approval of a Mr. H——, who was the legal adviser to "Bull," and who held, moreover, a considerable stake in the concern:—

"Sunday afternoon.

"MY DEAR S.,

"Time was, when one man writing to another received that other's answer, and that when a letter was marked 'private,' it was not handed about the town like a novel from a circulating library. We have been connected some twelve or thirteen years; I have by me dozens of your letters, as ably written as any man's I ever read — How comes it, then, now you

feel yourself bound to carry my private letter to a third person to have it replied to? If men who have so long known each other, take to *corresponding by attorney* — the world is a good deal altered since I began to know it.

“In the whole course of my dealings with you, and with every human being with whom I have had dealings, I never in my life played a game — never finessed — never manœuvred. *If I had chosen to do so, perhaps God has given me the power*; but there is no transaction of my life, public or private, in which I ever sought or desired to take advantage of a living creature; what, then, could induce you to take my private letter to your lawyer, and instruct him to reply to it — are you afraid of *me* or of *him*? That you are estranged from *me*, is most true — why, I know not; for, ever since I first knew you, to this moment, I have, wherever and whenever you have been mentioned, given you the entire credit for the honour, honesty, and integrity which I really and truly believe you possess. If you had answered my letter as heartily as it was written, and referred me to Mr. H——, well and good! * * * *

Rouse yourself — look about you — you ought to be rich and happy — you have now got rid of all your infernal acceptances — you are established in what, every body says, is an excellent business, and you have no bad income from ‘*B*,’ which don’t *curse* — you need not look back and recollect what it might have been — but look forward — look to brighter days — and, bright or black, up or down, believe me your friend in any way which I can be friendly — all I ask

is — *answer your own letters* — and believe me, yours most sincerely and faithfully,

“ T. E. H.”

The mention of Mr. H—— suggests an anecdote which Hook used to tell with the greatest glee, vouching for its authenticity on the authority of the noble peer, who was himself a party concerned. Mr. H—, he averred, having received a boar's head from some friend in Germany, happened to mention the circumstance to the late Marquis of Hertford, adding, “and now I have got this wonderful delicacy, I declare I don't know how it is to be dressed.”

“Oh!” said the Marquis, “send it to my cook, Champigni — he shall do the thing properly for you — it is really well worth eating.”

The banker availed himself of his lordship's offer, sent the head which, in due course of time, was returned, a handsome dish, artistically garnished, and bearing evident marks of a highly cultivated genius in its treatment.

“Well! and how did your head turn out, H——?” asked the marquis, the next time he fell in with his friend. “My fellow says he devoted himself to it with enthusiasm; it was one of the finest specimens he ever had the pleasure of manipulating.”

“I dare say he is right,” was the reply, “but if so, there was a great deal of trouble and ingenuity thrown away, for it was so confoundedly tough after all, that I, for one, could not get my teeth through it.”

“Tough! was it? — you could not have dressed it sufficiently.”

"Why, of course, I never dressed it at all — your people dressed it, and d—lish well, too — nothing could *look* better, but as to eating it — however, some of them at table contrived to get it down, and said it had the true flavour."

"My people?" repeated his lordship, "my man *dressed* it, certainly — but then, the cooking?"

"What cooking?" said H——, "it got no cooking but what he gave it; we ate it just as it was sent."

"What, *raw*?" said the marquis, "why, my good friend, Champigni only prepared the head for roasting — your men should have cooked it afterwards."

"Then why the devil did not the fool say so?" exclaimed the discomfited banker.

The coolness to which Mr. Hook alludes, as existing between Mr. Shackell and himself, and which was referable to the impaired circulation of their paper, appears to have increased in intensity, and to have resulted, as is the case of snowed up villages, in a cessation of all intercourse with each other, personal or otherwise. The *Jam satis* feeling was first manifested in the heart of Hook, and broke forth, not indeed in an ode, but in the following characteristic epistle:—

"Fulham, Sunday.

"MY DEAR S.,

"You cannot think how delighted I was to get a letter from you about *any thing*; they told me that you had been dead about two years, and I had put on mourning for you — and as I have never heard to the contrary from yourself, I, of course, believed it. I

must rejoice that I am mistaken. I have been dangerously ill myself, and very near dying, but, thank God, I am better, indeed I may say, quite well. I regret to hear from Edward, who has confirmed the report of your being alive, that you have been suffering from some local inflammation; I trust you will soon conquer it, and I beg you to believe that in *that*, as well as every thing else that concerns you, I am much and warmly interested, although your *demise*, or (as it turns out you are really alive) your various occupations so entirely prevent my ever seeing or hearing of you.

“Dead or alive, believe me, dear S.,

“Your’s, faithfully,

“T. E. H.”

We shall give one more extract from this correspondence, interesting in as much as it conveys Mr. Hook’s honest opinion of a rival, and because in so doing, it goes to shew how completely he was above those petty jealousies which too commonly deform the character of literary men, and that party blindness, not less rife among politicians, which refuses, with great consistency, to recognise merit in an opponent. —Nor need the well-crowned novelist himself receive with indifference an additional leaf, tendered, in all sincerity and truth, by such a hand:—

“Fulham, Wednesday morning

(Jan. 13, 1836).

“DEAR SHACKELL,

“You need not have written about *Rienzi*. It is no fault of yours. The fault is, that the seal of

letters and parcels directed to the 'Editor,' are opened at the office. If one person opens a letter or parcel, clearly having no right to do so, every body will do it, and you can have no check — a letter or parcel directed to the "Editor," ought to be, and *must* be, sacred; it is not because the letters and parcels are not directed to me by name, that they ought to be held sacred: the office the man holds is his identification. Suppose — as is always the case — letters are addressed to 'The Speaker of the House of Commons,' is that a reason why every member of the House should have the privilege of breaking them open?

"My position with J. B. is totally different from what it was ten, or even five years since. I am known as the Editor, and am responsible as Editor; and therefore it becomes necessary that I should do what is right and just to the paper and those who support it. Now, with respect to 'Rienzi.' It is written by Mr. Bulwer, with whom in politics I totally differ, whom I know personally, and whose writings I greatly admire: his publishers are Messrs. Saunders and Ottley * * * Well, they send 'Rienzi' some three weeks back to the 'Editor' of J. B., and, although half a dozen other novels are noticed and praised — which nobody much caring about reach me — this, which of all others I should wish to do justice to, *and doing justice to*, to *praise*, never comes to my hand. Why? because H — is reading it, and W — or somebody else has broken the seal which covered it to the Editor. * * *

"Don't fancy I blame *you* — how should you know

who breaks open this or that!—if once the principle is departed from, the little boy who brings me the proofs and is *my only colleague* in ‘Bull,’ may just as well open all the letters and take all the books.

“Read ‘Rienzi’ at your leisure, and send it me if you can, so as to get it, Friday. I never take more than one afternoon to read the best novel ever written.

“Yours truly,

“T. E. H.

“P.S.—I say, *Mum*!—this week the Hamburg Lottery draws—this *entre nous*.”

From this and other specimens given, it will be inferred that in the generality of Mr. Hook’s letters there was little remarkable, except the absence of that wit and humour which the known turn of his mind would have led us to expect; he seems, as one of his friends observes, “to have written his Hebrew* without points.” But, independent of a careless inaccuracy not altogether incompatible with grace in familiar correspondence, his general style betrays a roughness we are certainly not prepared for in so practised a writer. Of course, there can be no doubt that Hook could write admirable letters—there are sufficient evidences of that—if he took the pains, the only marvel is, that pains should, in his case, have been requisite. Nothing, indeed, has surprised us more, in the course of our examination of the papers from which these memoirs have been compiled, than the deficiency of interest, as regards both quantity and

* His handwriting, in point of legibility, was not undeserving the term.

quality, existing in those which bear his own signature. It is true that most of these, and they are tolerably numerous, bear evident marks of haste—the very characters being small, imperfectly formed, and not unlike the abbreviated symbols of shorthand—but, accustomed as his mental energies were to move at railroad pace, more of smoothness and precision might have been expected in their most hurried efforts.

The postscript in the letter last quoted relates to a transaction curiously illustrative of the faith, to which allusion has been made before, he was accustomed to put in dreams and omens.



MR. T. E. HOOK'S HOUSE, FULHAM.

Mr. Shackell had walked over one afternoon from Hammersmith to Fulham, and found his friend, in spite of some outstanding differences, all excitement and cordiality.

“Pray, my good fellow,” he exclaimed, “sit down; I knew you would come. I have been expecting you all the morning, and have stayed in on purpose to see you.”

On Mr. Shackell inquiring the grounds for this conviction, which appeared strange, as they were not exactly on visiting terms at the time, Hook replied that he had “dreamed a dream;” and proceeded to relate, with an abundance of detail, that in this portentous vision he had contrived to fix firm hold on the famed black eagle of Germany, but that the powerful bird was on the point of extricating himself from his grasp, when an ally appeared in the person of Mr. Shackell; and that, with the latter’s assistance, he had succeeded, after a long struggle, in chaining down and securing the two necked guardian of the house of Hapsburg.

“And what on earth,” asked his friend in astonishment, “do you suppose to be meant by all this?”

“Meant!” repeated Hook, “Why, my dear fellow, the thing is as plain as possible—there *can* be no mistake in the application. I, at this moment, have in my desk a couple of tickets in the Hamburgh lottery, which I must either pay for, or return, by the 31st of the month—now all I ask is that you will be obliging enough—and I know you will—to hand me a check for the amount and not suffer the prize to slip between our fingers.”

With this request it will not appear surprising that Mr. Shackell very resolutely refused compliance.

“Well, well,” said the seer; “never mind; if you won’t there’s an end, but you must stay and take

some luncheon; so sit down, and meanwhile let us have a hit or two at backgammon."

Down they sat, the board was produced, a broiled fowl soon made its appearance—"something comfortable" followed, evening drew in, candles were lit, they chatted and played on; and, when Mr. Shackell rose to depart, which he did about eleven at night, he left his friend perfectly happy in the possession of the two prolific seeds which were to yield an entire harvest of themselves; and of which he himself had been coaxed into becoming a joint proprietor. They were accordingly enclosed in an envelope, at the desire of Hook, with the respective seals and signatures attached of the two partners "who were to share and share alike," in the division of the proceeds.

The tickets, as lottery tickets, and especially German lottery tickets, occasionally will do, turned up blanks, and the only value left remaining to the precious packet was what still attaches to it as a curious autograph, and as an evidence of the one weak spot in a mind of Achillean mould.

CHAPTER XV.

MR. HOOK'S ILLNESS.—THE RIVAL RACONTEURS.—HIS LAST INTERVIEW WITH MR. BARHAM.—HIS DEATH.—SUBSCRIPTION FOR HIS FAMILY.—ATTEMPTED HOAX UPON MR. HOOK BY SOUTHEY.—“THE DEVIL'S WALK.”—GENERAL REMARKS.—CONCLUSION.

OF the five or six concluding years of Mr. Hook's life, there is little to be told, we believe, but what may be found recorded in the “fashionable” column of the “Morning Post.” As a “lion,” and as a man of mark, far superior to the mere table wit, his reputation was rising and spreading to the end; the last entry in his diary will serve to shew the character of the circles in which he was at that time moving:—

“Sunday, June 20th. — To day, ill — but in to dinner to Lord Harrington's, to meet the Duke of Wellington. There, Duke and Duchess of Bedford, Lord and Lady Southampton, Lord Londonderry, Lord Canterbury, Lord Lyndhurst, Lord Redesdale, Lord Charleville, Lord Strangford, Lord Stuart De Rothsay, Count D'Orsay, Lord Chesterfield, and Fitzroy Stanhope. I and Lord Canterbury away early — so for five minutes to Carlton!” — *Quart. Rev. ut sup.*

But his literary fame may be said to have reached its meridian point in 1836, after the appearance of “Gilbert Gurney;” and from that *chef d'œuvre* to have dated its decline.

As regards the state of his finances, every Christ-

mas found them more and more involved, till extrication from his debts, save by the hand of death, appeared even to him, sanguine as he was, utterly hopeless. Some indication there appears to have been, on the part of his political friends, on their accession to power, in 1834, to reward his devotion to their cause, with a place of considerable value, but the design was prosecuted with little energy, and necessarily fell to the ground, on the re-establishment of the Whig ministry. Meanwhile, the anxieties, chiefly on account of his unfortunate family, under which he laboured, combined with the irregular mode of life which, it cannot be doubted, they were active in promoting, began to tell with fatal effect upon a constitution naturally robust, but tried and tampered with from boyhood. His frame and countenance betrayed unequivocal symptoms of what was going on within; his appetite failed, and he became latterly almost entirely dependent for support on strong stimulants — but his mental faculties never failed, nor shewed signs of decay, till about to be withdrawn for ever.

In May, 1841, he dined, for the last time, with Mr. Barham; the party had been made up, in a great measure, for the purpose of bringing together him and Lord —, one of the few magnates in literature and wit with whom he was not previously acquainted. Hook came late, and appeared feeble and out of spirits, but he soon rallied, and throughout the evening, fortunately not prolonged till his powers were exhausted — bore himself bravely in the convivial tourney with his noble rival.

No two men, perhaps, qualified and accustomed to

shine in the best society, each especially distinguished as a *raconteur*, were more dissimilar in style — the former, abounding in a refined and delicate humour, smooth and polished in his language, every sentence that fell from his lips expressed in the choicest terms ; the latter, pointed, bold, and sparkling, rapid in utterance, dramatic in effect, more facile in attack than defence—they seemed the very Ajax and Ulysses of conversational eloquence ; the resemblance being immediately suggested by the delivery of a couple of *historiettes*, the one directly following upon the other, and thus affording, by their juxtaposition, a lively contrast from the difference of tone and manner in the speakers.

Lord ——'s was given in the form of narrative, diffuse and elaborate, and might have been transferred, without the correction of a word, to the pages of a "Tatler," or "Spectator;" any attempt to present it, save in its own proper dress, would be ineffective and unfair. Hook, on the contrary, conjured up a single scene, bringing forward the actors in a distinct shape, and rendering all the details present and visible to the eye. In both cases there was, perhaps, a deficiency of point which, without the graceful handling on the one side, and the admirable bye-play on the other, would have rendered their respective anecdotes dull and common-place. After what has been said, it may seem something like self-refutation, to offer a meagre outline of what owed its success mainly to the exquisite mixture of pathos and comedy, with which it was filled up, aided by the untranslatable accessories of eye and gesture; yet, as

affording subject for the last display of Mr. Hook's powers, of which the writer was a witness, he may, perhaps, be pardoned for giving the ground-work, slight as it is.

The story, which was elicited by some casual remarks on the strange expressions of sympathy employed by the lower orders, ran as follows:—A midshipman, the fifth son of an earl, quite a child, about twelve or thirteen years old, having been sent to join his ship at Portsmouth, was taken on board one bleak rainy night, and introduced to the captain. The captain received him civilly, and after a few inquiries respecting the health of various members of his family, to whose influence the gallant commander owed his appointment, gave him a glass of sherry, accompanied with one of those nods, which coming from a superior officer to a middy, is, being interpreted, “Drink and be off!”

The boy obeyed, and contrived with some difficulty to find his way to the deck. Here, wet and miserable, chilled to the bone, sea-sick and home-sick, as the memory of the luxurious comforts of his mother's boudoir he had so lately lost, rose up before him, the poor child crept under the shelter of a gun, lay crouched down, and cried with grief as though his heart were breaking.

In this condition he was found by one of those conventional boatswains very common in nautical novels, and, for all we know to the contrary, in Her Majesty's navy also; his face laying claim to no particular features, but all knobs and indentations, and half covered with reddish coloured hair.

"Hollo ! young gen'leman," cried this individual, "what's the matter ? What, piping your eye ! that 'll never do. Why how long have you been aboard ?"

"About two hours, sir," said the boy.

"Well, well, young gen'leman, cheer up, it can't be helped. Who are you—what's your father ?"

"He is an earl, sir."

"Oh, an earl, is he. Ah ! well never mind, *that* can't be helped ! Got ever a mother, young gen'leman ?"

"Ye-e-s, sir."

"Well, never mind young gen'leman, you can't help *that*. What do they call *her* ?"

"She is a countess, sir."

"And did you cry at leaving of her, young gen'leman, eh ?" asked the old *sea-dog* (as we believe he would be called) not a little moved at the poor child's distress.

"Ye-e-s, sir," was the reply.

"And did she cry, too ?" continued the tar, still more affected.

"Oh, ye-e-s, sir, very—much—indeed !" sobbed out the little fellow, his breast almost bursting with the recollections of "home" and the parting scene.

"She cried very much, did she !" repeated the old sailor, and wiping his eye muttered in a sad and sympathising tone,—"*Poor old Buffer !*"

Hook quitted early and made no attempt at improvisation ; it was, we believe, one of the last occasions on which he dined in town—the party at Lord Harrington's, June 20th, has been mentioned, and he subsequently appeared at an intimate friend's at

Brompton ; but the structure, long undermined, was rent and tottering to its fall ; it is mentioned that on that evening, as he stood with his coffee in his hand in the drawing-room, he suddenly turned to the mirror and said, " Ay, I see I look as I am—done up in purse, in mind, and in body, too, at last."

About a month before his decease he wrote to Mr. Barham, whom he requested to run down to Fulham and see him, as he was too ill to leave home himself ; and of the interview which ensued we are enabled to give a somewhat full account, committed to paper shortly afterwards, and evidently with the view of fixing the impression, yet fresh, in the writer's mind.*

" It was on the 29th of July, 1841, that I last saw poor Hook. I had received a note from him requesting me to come down and see him, as he wished much to talk over some matters of importance, and could not, from the state of his health, drive into town. I went accordingly, and after a long conversation which related principally to * * * and to his novel, ' Peregrine Bunce,' then going through the press, but which he never lived to complete, a roast fowl was put on the table for luncheon. He helped me and took a piece himself, but laid down his knife and fork after the first mouthful, which, indeed, he made an unsuccessful attempt to swallow ; on my observing his unusual want of appetite—for his luncheon was in

* Some of these particulars have been already laid before the public, in a letter addressed to Mrs. Hughes, which is printed in the brief memoir of the Rev. R. H. Barham, before alluded to.

general his dinner—he said:—‘It is of no use, old fellow, the fact is I have not tasted a morsel of solid food these five days!’ ‘Then what on earth have you lived upon?’ to which he replied, ‘Effervescing draughts;’ adding afterwards, that he was allowed to take occasionally a tumbler of ‘rum and milk,’ or a pint of Guinness’s bottled porter.

“On hearing this, I strongly pressed on him the necessity of having further advice, which he at length promised he would do, if he were not better in a day or two. I told him that my wife and myself were going down to the Isle of Thanet, and pressed him very much to throw work overboard for a while, and accompany us and be nursed. He said, however, ‘he was completely tied to his desk till he had concluded what he was then writing for Colburn and Bentley; but that he should get quite clear of his trammels in about a month, and then, if we were still there, he would make an effort to pay us a visit. * * *’

“On rising to take leave of him I said, ‘Well, Hook, you had better think again of it—change your mind; put ‘Peregrine’ in your pocket, if needs must, and give him a chapter at Margate.’ He shook his head without answering; and it was then, that looking earnestly into his countenance, which for the first time had lost its accustomed smile, I saw how ill he appeared, for he had previously, whether designedly or no I cannot say, been sitting with his back to the light. We had now reached the hall-door, when in reply to my observation, ‘Really, my dear Hook, your illness has pulled you a good deal,’ he answered, ‘Pulled me! Look here!’ opening, at

the same time, a large shawl-patterned dressing-gown which he had worn confined round the waist by a sort of belt, and shewing me a thin man in a stout man's clothes.

"I was so shocked that I returned back with him to the library, and again earnestly pressed upon him the necessity of having the best advice. This he again promised he would do, and I quitted him, little thinking, however, that it was for the last time. He promised to write and let me know what the physicians, to be called in, thought of his case, but day after day passed on and no letter reached me."

In truth he was soon past writing, death was advancing upon him with rapid strides, while earthly prospects were growing, daily, darker and more threatening. It is painful to reflect that his last hours, ere the struggling mind had sunk into insensibility, were disturbed by the apprehension of inability to meet a couple of bills of comparatively trifling amount, on the point, as he believed, of becoming due.* On Friday, the 13th of August, he took finally to his bed, the stream hurried on with increasing velocity as it approached the fall—a brief agitated interval, happily not neglected, was left for the first, last work of erring man, and on the evening of the 24th he expired. During the preceding week his nephew, Mr. Robert Hook, had been constantly by his bedside, and had joined him in that devotional preparation but too commonly postponed till the enemy is at the gate.

The disorder under which he had been labouring

* One had actually been paid.

for years, arose from a diseased state of the liver and stomach, brought on partly by mental anxiety, but principally, it is to be feared, by that habit of over indulgence at table, the curse of colonial life, which he had early acquired, and to which he held with fatal perseverance to the end. It needed no ordinary powers to enable him to sustain the contest so long ; but his frame was robust and his constitution vigorous ; and he seems to have possessed, in a remarkable degree, that power of maintaining the supremacy of mind over matter, which rendered him indifferent to, or unconscious of, the first slow approaches of decay. He was buried with extreme privacy at Fulham ; a simple stone bearing his name and age marks the spot, which is immediately opposite the chancel window, and within a few paces of his former home.

He left five children, two boys and three girls, who, together with their mother, were relieved from instant embarrassment by the prompt liberality of four of his true friends, Messrs. Milne, Broderip, Powell, and Lyons, who each came forward with a hundred pounds.* This sum proved the nucleus of a subscription afterwards set on foot by the executors, which realized something under 3,000*l.* : the King of Hanover generously gave 500*l.* With that splendid

* A year or two before his death, Mr. Hook had been induced to apply to Mr. Majoribanks, who, on learning the number of his family, instantly offered to provide for one ; and, accordingly, he soon afterwards, presented a cadetship to the eldest boy, who has recently, we believe, received a handsome appointment at the hands of Lord Hardinge.

exception, the names appearing on the list are mostly those of men in moderate circumstances, and of his own rank in life ; more than one of his nobler acquaintances declining, on the score, we believe, of a nice morality, to contribute to the undertaking. Such scruples are, of course, entitled to deference, however we may deplore the severity with which they necessarily operated on individuals of themselves blameless and unoffending, or regret that a more timely display of them was not made effectual to the discountenancing, and, possibly, correcting of the original fault. Such a manifestation would have proved, perhaps, even more favorable to the cause of virtue ; and would at all events have preserved those gentlemen from the painful position in which they were placed. It is always unfortunate for a man, when his first protest against a vice happens to be coincident with his interest.

The whole of Mr. Hook's effects were again, *for the third time*, submitted to the hammer, and the proceeds of the sale, 2,500*l.*, seized, as on previous occasions, by the Lords of the Treasury, in liquidation of the outstanding Mauritius debt. Here, again, was a late but opportune opening of the eyes of Justice. The delinquent himself had long been spared even by his old enemies, the Whigs ; it was reserved for his personal and political *friends* to visit—an edifying instance of impartiality—the sin of the father upon the children. A question may, perhaps, arise, touching the equity, not of *this* proceeding, but of offering a place of public trust, as we have seen was done by a Conservative administration, to an individual in '34,

against whom it was thought necessary to carry out so stern a sentence in '41 ! There appears upon the face of the two transactions, an inconsistency which it certainly passes our casuistry to reconcile.

Among the late Mr. Barham's papers, we have found the following rather curious statement :—

“ Mr. B— called on me in Feb. last with an envelope endorsed in Theodore Hook's handwriting, '*Letters to me as author of the 'Doctor.'*' On inquiry at Messrs. Longmans', who published the work, it appeared that their firm was altogether ignorant of the name of the author; all their transactions with him having passed through the hands of an intermediate agent. It also appeared that, previously to the publication of the first volume, they had been directed to strike off several copies on superior paper, with a fly-leaf in each, bearing the name of the individual to whom it was to be presented, printed in red letter. These copies were then transmitted by them to several of the literary characters of the day, and letters, supposed to contain their acknowledgments, were subsequently received by the publishers, and forwarded in due course, through the usual channel, to the author.”

“ These seem to have been the letters now found. They were all of them addressed, in a large hand, to 'Theodore Hook, Esq., Cleveland Row,' and among them was, one from *Southey himself*, Lord Mahon, D'IIsraeli, Wordsworth, &c., &c. The post-marks upon the envelopes in which they reached Hook, were Pall Mall and St. James's Street. This would seem to be conclusive that Hook at least had some-

thing to do with the work, and though, from internal evidence, it is perfectly clear that he could not have been the sole author, still, by the aid of his brother's (the Dean's) papers, he might well have concocted the book; [a hint to this effect is thrown out in the work itself;] Dean Hook died in 1828, the first volume of the 'Doctor' was published in 1834.

"On the other hand, Mrs. Southey, in a letter dated Greta Hall, 27th Feb., 1843, positively claims the work as her husband's, she says:—

" 'Undoubtedly you have my full authority to affirm that my husband *is the author of the 'Doctor.'* Not till within this last twelve months have I ever acknowledged this, directly or indirectly; but I found that others had been less scrupulous, and therefore it would be absurd and unwise in me to affect further mystery about it. If you do not find my simple affirmative suffice to convince the doubters and *claimants*, I could give you more irrefragable proof in the shape of proof sheets, MS. copy, &c. It has always been marvellous to me that the authorship could ever have been doubtful to those who knew much of Mr. Southey—still more to those who were acquainted with his family and *vie interieuse* so graphically portrayed in the first volume.—'My wife and my wife's sister,' *are to the life*. The *Bhow Begum* was a Miss —, an intimate friend at *that time*. The beautiful idea of William Dove was from an uncle of Mr. Southey. I have many proof sheets of a sixth volume, which was half through the press before we left Buckland. My dear husband used to enjoy that innocent mystery, and had laid out plans to make me

a contributor to the future olio. There are materials for several more volumes collected.'

"This certainly settles the business as to the authorship; it is, nevertheless, not a little unaccountable how these letters came into Theodore Hook's possession; at his death they were found in a sealed box which he had directed to be delivered, immediately on his decease, into the hands of one of his executors. Mr. P—— told me that Hook was acquainted with Southey, whom he had met at Mr. Croker's. "R. H. B."

All this speculation is of course idle now, but it is not unamusing to track the windings of the critic through the labyrinth, with the ground-plan mapped out before us. There cannot be the slightest doubt that Hook had nothing whatever to do with the "Doctor;" but that the letters were genuine, and were forwarded to him through the channel alluded to, is also certain. It was evidently an attempt at a hoax, and meant as a trap for the intended victim's vanity. That Theodore Hook was perfectly fair game must be admitted, but his flight was, unfortunately for those who love to see the biter bitten, of somewhat too high a range for the stoop of the Laureate.

Mr. Southey was fond of this kind of mystification, and of throwing about unclaimed literary valuables as temptations in the way of the weak and dishonest, and then pouncing upon the unlucky possessor of the stolen goods, as appears from his long silence respecting his claim to "The Devil's Walk," and his

admission of the design in the following additional stanzas which have not, so far as we know, appeared in print :—

- “The Devil then he prophecied
It would one day be matter of talk,
That the erudite bibber had written
The story of his Walk.
- “A pretty mistake, quoth the Devil,
A pretty mistake I opine.
I have put my ill thoughts in his mouth,
He will never put good ones in mine ;
- “And whoever shall say that to Porson
Those best of all verses belong,
Will be an untruth-telling ———,
And so shall be called in the song.
- “This excellent poem will prove
A nice trap for dishonest ambition,
Wherein he shall be caught by the leg,
And exposed, in the Second Edition.”

Upon some points the reader of the foregoing pages has, we trust, been enabled to form his own estimate of the character of Theodore Hook ; as regards others, the development of which has scarcely fallen within the scope of the present work, we shall venture a few observations, founded chiefly on the decisions of those whose habits of intimacy with him entitle their testimony to respect. His intellectual qualities have already been discussed at some length, and sufficient examples given of the variety and compass of his wit.

As a dramatic author, his fame was built on a foundation too slight to last; the cleverest of his pieces were written to display the powers, or contrast the peculiarities of particular actors, and with them may be considered to have retired from the stage. But as a novelist, we have ventured to affirm, that his reputation stands high and is broadly based; in the delineation of modern English life, in laying bare the hidden springs of human action, effected, the one without mannerism, the other without pretension; in the faithfulness of—

“ His glowing portraits fresh from life, that bring
Home to our hearts the truth from which they spring,”

he need fear comparison with none of his contemporaries. Here and there, too, throughout his pages are to be found pearls of richer value, sound sagacious reflections, scraps of a practical philosophy thrown in with a light and careless hand, and affording an instance, for once, of easy writing proving easy reading also. Something beyond the brief span of life commonly allotted to *pièces de circonstance*, may also be promised to his poetical triflings:—

“ When time who steals their *wit* away,
Shall steal their *venom* too,”

enough of interest will, we think, remain to entitle them to a place beside the gems of the “ Anti-Jacobin,” and other *excerpta* of by-gone politics.

Nothing, in general, presents such difficulties to posterity, as allusions the most easily appreciated

when uttered—nothing comes so hard to the student as the light literature of preceding ages—nothing so dull as humour out of date. It resembles those rarer metals called into a momentary, bright existence by the electric stroke, which speedily effloresce on contact with the air, and leave little but a dull residuum behind. Hook's genius worked with a more endurable material; much that he has written will be satire "for all time."

But what principally strikes us in the consideration of his intellectual powers, is the slight assistance they could have derived from education. That a man who has constantly before him the fear of getting out of his depth, should be more observant, more keen, more careful than another possessed of a greater self-confidence, is intelligible enough; the marvel is, not so much that a man of his tact and shrewdness should have escaped committing himself, as that one of his habits should have actually succeeded in picking up so much valuable and available knowledge.

In his boyhood, as we have seen, which was imprudently abbreviated by some of its most important years, he was rather remarkable for idleness and inattention; nor did he, so far as we can learn, when subjected to the stricter discipline of a public school, and pitted against the young *athletes* of the land, apply himself to study with much increase of diligence, or even exhibit any great compensating capacity for acquiring learning without the usual exertion. At sixteen, he was thrown upon the world—and such a world!—The playhouse, its boxes, and its green-room! His early manhood was engaged in the busi-

ness and pleasures of active life, and his prime occupied rather in drawing rapid harvests from the natural fulness of his mind, than in cultivating and enriching it by study.

The period of his confinement in Shire Lane was probably not passed in indolence; the Mauritius accounts were made up, so far as he was able to make them, the "Bull," indeed, was conducted at that time almost entirely by himself, but the space devoted to original articles was but small, and the early energy of its style considerably reduced; many hours then would have been at his disposal during the dreary day—the night was commonly spent in convivial reunions—which might be profitably directed to the mastery of subjects, such as his writings and conversation shew him to have possessed. This, at least, appears to have been the only interval of leisure in his restless career. Its close was marked with too much of exhausting excitement abroad, and over labour at home, to allow of more than a hurried attention to those current topics, a general acquaintance with which, or something more, is indispensable to the journalist.

In his political views he was clear and consistent; maintaining always an unshaken loyalty, strengthened by deep feelings of personal attachment to the Sovereign, although that Sovereign appeared to him in the not very conciliating character of a "detaining creditor;"* ever active in defence of the constitution

* One of the entries in his diary runs as follows:—"August 12th.—This is the birthday of George IV. GOD SAVE MY DETAINING CREDITOR!"

against the inroads of democratic, and what are pleasantly denominated "Reform" principles, even though the party that were benefiting by his exertions wanted the courage to extend to him an indulgence, not to say a justice, accorded unhesitatingly to divers individuals similarly unfortunate; pleading the cause of true religion against folly, fanaticism, and infidelity, with a power that testified, at least, to the strength of his convictions, and permitting no considerations of private friendship to warp his sentiments or control their utterance.

That this steady independence never, it must be remembered, obtruded into private life, after the manner of patriots and newsmongers,* not only merits, but secures respect, and is evidenced by the motley crowd of partisans of all denominations, from Princes of the blood to the "Pride of Westminster," that courted his society.

His social qualities were only too attractive; he not only delighted by his talents, but charmed by that easy benevolence in trifles, in which true politeness is defined to consist; to men younger and less gifted, his demeanour was gentle and encouraging; to children, those who could sit and listen, all eye and ear, to his music and his mirth, he was remarkably indulgent. Unrivalled as a talker, he was, what perhaps is almost equally appreciated, patient as a listener.

His old friend, Mr. Dubois, thus writes:—

* He used to say, that no man who knew anything about politics ever talked of them, except by appointment; any gentleman constantly referring to the "division of last night," &c., he set down an ignoramus.

"I may remark, from my own long experience of him, that a most agreeable point in Hook's social character was, that he had no envy, he was as pleased at listening to others' jests as to jesting himself—and was no old story teller. In this he was the reverse of —; all Hook's wit and gaiety was original, impromptu, the offspring of the moment; to chloroform—it was only necessary that Hook should be at the same table; — was then dumb, concealed his old stores, and yielded the *pas*."

It is not too much to say that, by those admitted within the pale of intimacy, he was not more admired than beloved. Less familiar acquaintances regarded him with no ordinary affection; a feeling deeply and generally participated in—and the fact reflects no mean praise—throughout the neighbourhood in which he resided.

With his titled friends he remained in constant request till the very last; since the days of Sheridan, no such brilliant luminary had flashed across the realm of fashion; and his was no lingering sunset to weary out the faith of his worshippers; he set suddenly, and for ever, in the midst of adoration.

In person, Theodore Hook was above the middle height, his frame was robust and well-proportioned, possessing a breadth and depth of chest, which, joined to a constitution naturally of the strongest order, would have seemed, under ordinary care, to hold out promise of a long and healthy life. His countenance was fine and commanding, his features when in repose, settling into a somewhat stern and heavy expression, but all alive and alight with genius the instant

his lips were opened. His eye was dark, large, and full — to the epithet, *βωωπις*, he, not less justly than the venerable goddess, was entitled. His voice was rich, deep, and melodious.

In his youth he has been accused of a tendency to foppery, and if an admission into which he was surprised during his illness, is to be taken literally, he must, in his decline, have paid an attention, more than is common or quite legitimate, to the claims of the toilette. In his tastes as regarded the table, (though a contrary impression might have been left from his writings,) he was simple enough; and, what perhaps may be heard with more surprise, there was in his disposition a leaven of shyness, and a diffidence, that led him to betray considerable embarrassment, when called upon to speak in public, when the circumstances of the case precluded his accustomed retreat behind the mask of Thalia. On the score of notoriety, too, he was more sensitive than might have been expected — frequently signing himself merely “Edward Theodore,” on the “Free list” of the theatres, with a view of escaping recognition from the crowd that followed.*

* A character so marked as Hook’s was not likely to escape the notice of brother authors. He is introduced by more than one; of his appearance in “Coningsby” we have elsewhere found occasion to speak. Everybody has heard of the artist’s difficulty in depicting the features of a father agitated by the spectacle of his daughter’s sacrifice, and of his happy extrication from the embarrassment, by the ingenious plan of altogether concealing the monarch’s countenance in his robe. A bold experiment, which Mr. D’Israeli has followed, with but indifferent success, in dealing with his portrait of Theodore Hook; the common outline

That he was generous, high-minded, and tender-hearted, all that knew him eagerly bear witness; his long and fondly cherished memory of his mother, is, in itself, incompatible with a disposition selfish or corrupt.

Into the privacy of his domestic life we are unable to follow him, but that his was a nature well endowed to find happiness, and to engender it in the bosom of his family, is unquestionable; painful, but not unconstructive, is the reflection, that by means of one false step, hastily taken and which he wanted the resolution to retrace, the streams of the purest earthly bliss should have been poisoned at their source — solace and self-respect banished from his hearth! What extenuating circumstances there may be, must be sought for in that neglect of religious training, to which his youth was exposed, and in the proverbial laxity of morals of those classes, among whom his lot, in early life, was cast. The same account is to be given of those sins of the tongue, those “idle words” in which

of a common man is given with great precision, but the wit and genius are most effectually concealed behind the impenetrable drapery of the artist. The best of these attempts is a slight sketch, only too slight, in the “Tuft-hunter,” by Lord William Lennox, who could well appreciate the brilliant qualities of his friend. *Reginald Sparkle* (so he is called) appears, if we remember right, but once, (as with *Mercutio*, it was necessary to get rid of him soon,) and then at a dinner-party, a scene certainly the best calculated for the display of his powers, and drawing proportionally on those of the author. It is, however, admirably sustained, abounding in point, but natural withal and lifelike. We seem familiar even with the borrowed dining-room at *Mr. Slo-joose’s*.

he was sometime too ready to indulge. In this respect, indeed, a very marked improvement was observed by his old associates, on his return from the Mauritius;—affliction, it may be inferred, had brought understanding on its wings. We hail, then, with no ordinary degree of satisfaction, those indications of a humble, hopeful Christian spirit which are disclosed in his writings, and in such portions of his diary as have been made public, and which were more fully developed during his last illness.

As regards his debts, we are unable to speak with any thing like precision, of the amount: it was very considerable, much beyond what had been anticipated, except by those admitted professionally to his confidence; here, however, again allowance must, in fairness, be made for the trials to which his prudence was subjected; as has been justly observed, "It is a great disadvantage, relatively speaking, to any man, and especially to a very careless and a very sanguine man, to have possessed an uncertain and fluctuating income. That disadvantage is greatly increased, if the person so circumstanced has conceived himself to be, in some degree, entitled to presume, that, by the exertion of his own talents, he may at pleasure increase that income—thereby becoming induced to make promises to himself, which he may afterwards fail to fulfil. Occasional excess and frequent unpunctuality will be the natural consequences of such a situation."

Such was the exact position of Theodore Hook; and to the sources of embarrassment here pointed out may be added the difficulties into which he was plunged

through the defalcation of others ; the heavy expenses entailed by his own family, and the harassing pressure of other claims which his kind and generous nature prompted him to recognise, but which could only be satisfied by increase of personal involvement.

In the fascinating charms of his conversation he not a little reminds us of him, whose words we have lately quoted, his friend and first patron, Sheridan. Nor is the resemblance existing between these extraordinary men perceptible only in their natural endowments, points of resemblance arise and catch the eye throughout their whole career of life, but are most striking at the commencement and towards the close.

They sprang from the same middle rank of society, and were educated, or rather half-educated, at the same school, Harrow, where they seem equally to have been distinguished as idle, careless, and engaging. Their mothers, also, both snatched away too soon, appear to have been alike in their amiable dispositions, estimable characters, and in those gifts of nature which they transmitted to their sons. Sheridan, as well as Hook, had an elder brother more blessed than himself in the watchful care exercised over his youth, and more happy, more prosperous, though less brilliant in his subsequent course. The treatment the two young men experienced at the hands of their fathers, though opposite enough in all other respects, had a like issue ; leaving them, from indifference on the one side, and an over indulgence, no less culpable, on the other, to enter immaturity on the world, and to seek their fortune where and how they listed. The early tastes of both gravitated

towards the same centre—the stage; through the same portal they passed into the upper and alien world of fashion, and illuminated it by the same flashing “sparks of immortality!” not, however, that we venture to contend for any general parity of genius between Theodore Hook and—

“The worthy rival of the wondrous three!”

it is only in the humbler field of social eloquence and convivial wit that a comparison is suggested which Hook need fear with none.

In point of genuine extemporaneity and absence of artifice, he was far superior to Sheridan himself, whose *bon mots* were premeditated and elaborated to a degree, which must, indeed, have rendered their opportune introduction as great a marvel as the instantaneous conception would have appeared. The efforts, however, of both were equally successful, and met with a similar recompense — *fêtes*, flattery, and forgetfulness! Of the identity of causes that mainly led to those pecuniary distresses, which hastened and embittered their decline, we have already spoken, and here, perhaps, the parallel must stop.*

Hook anticipated, by an early and almost sudden departure, the desertion of his gay companions and the indignities that marked the death-bed scene of Sheridan; and while, on the other hand, the nobles

* It might, perhaps, be pushed even farther; it is at least curious that, as the smiles of a Prince of Wales graced them both at the outset of life, so the ministrations of a Bishop of London were tendered to solace them both at the close, although, in Mr. Hook's case, the offer unfortunately came too late.

of the land—dukes, marquises, earls, princes of the blood, and first officers of the state aroused, as by the breaking of a spell, crowded, at last, round the relics of the latter, and bore them in all the pomp and pageantry of woe to their glorious tomb in Westminster Abbey, a few untitled friends followed Theodore Hook to his humble grave in Fulham Church-yard.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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